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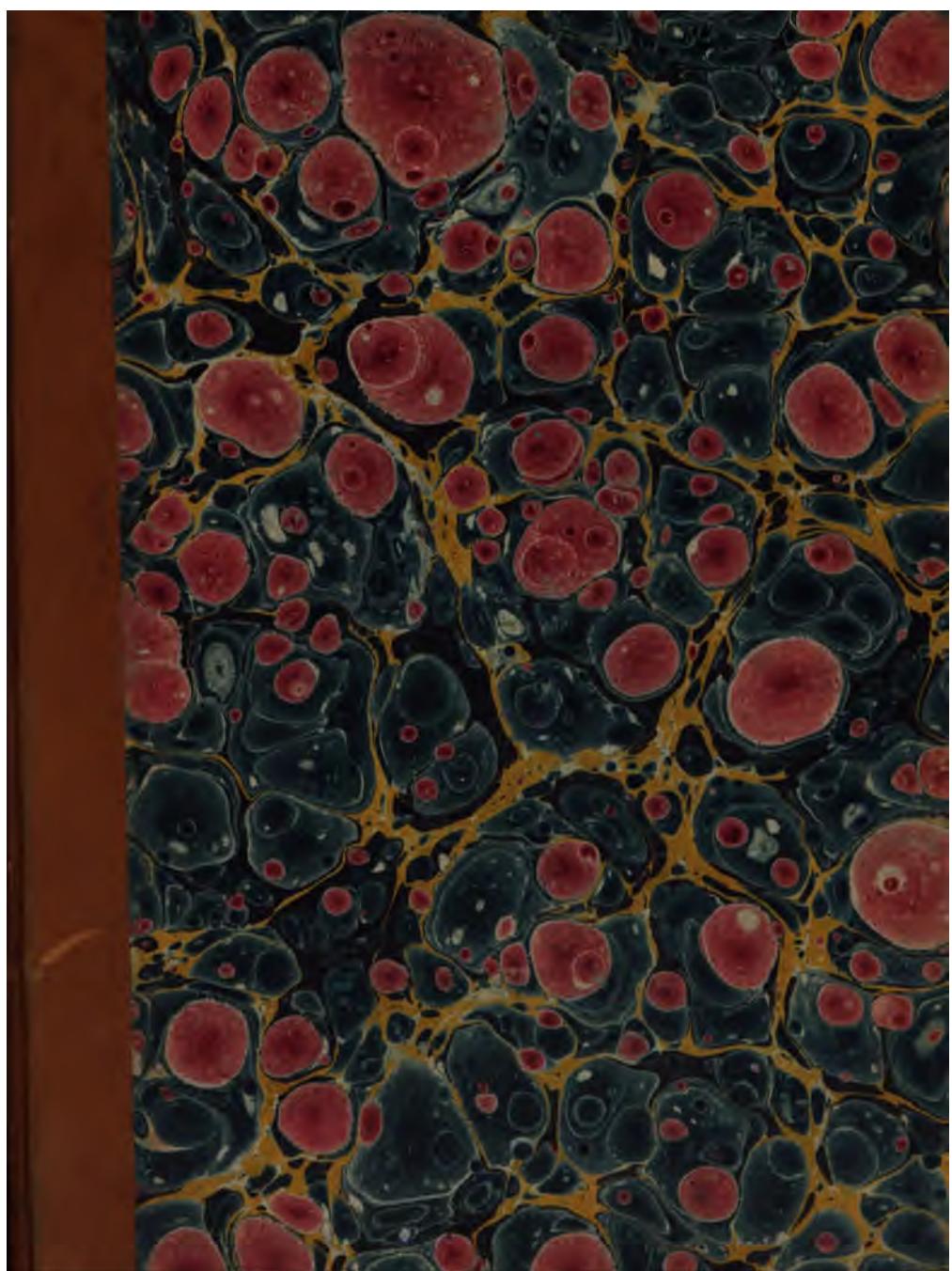
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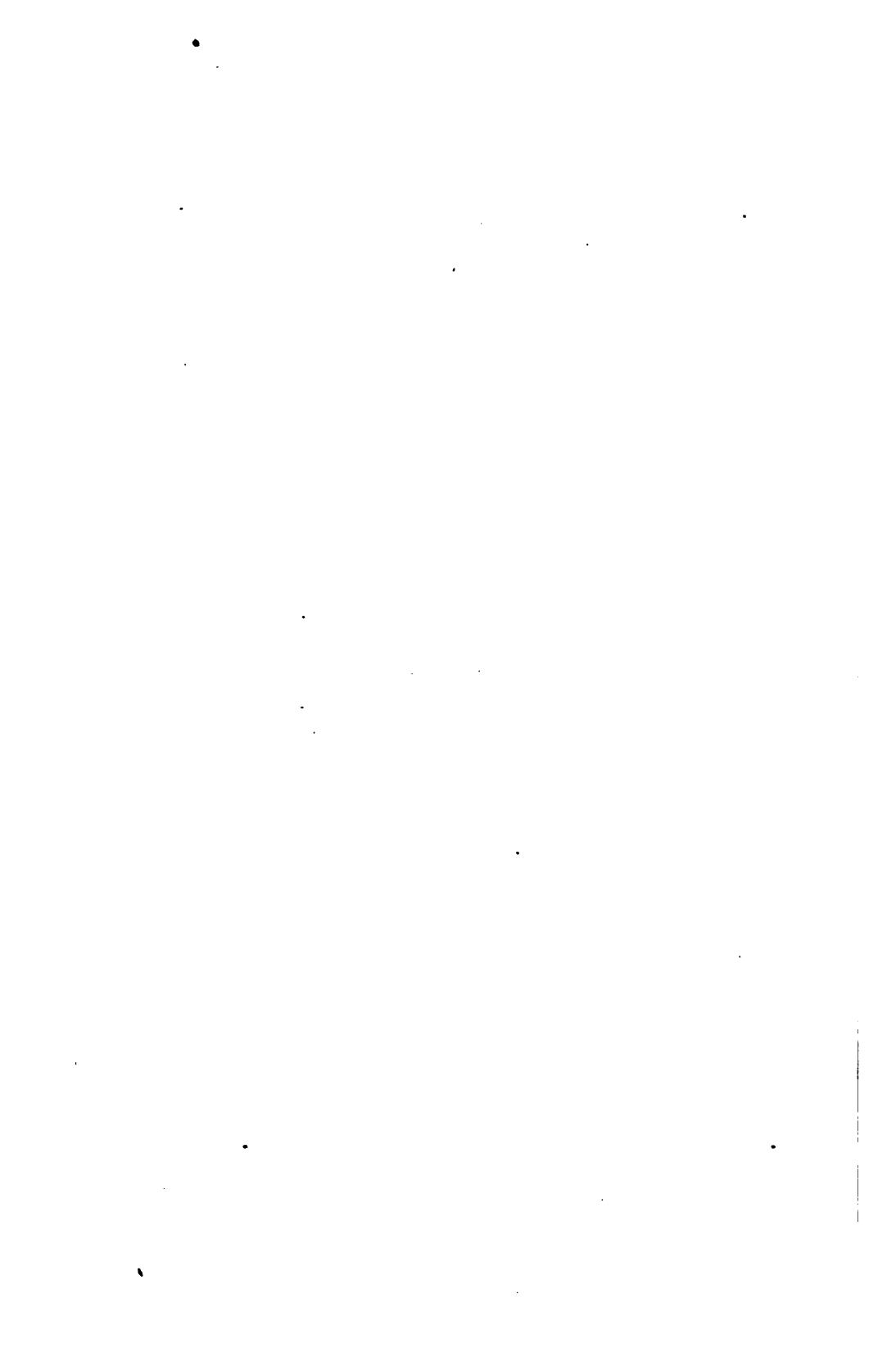
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47.1259.







THE HEART AND THE WORLD.

A Play in Five Acts.

(AS REPRESENTED AT THE THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.)

BY

WESTLAND MARSTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE PATRICIAN'S DAUGHTER," A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS,
"GERALD," A DRAMATIC POEM, ETC., ETC.



LONDON:

C. MITCHELL, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.

MDCCLXVII.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE PATRICIAN'S DAUGHTER; a Tragedy, in five acts, as represented at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Fifth edition, price 2*s.* 6*d.*

GERALD; a Dramatic Poem, and other Poems. Cloth, gilt, price 5*s.* 6*d.* C. Mitchell, 12, Red Lion Court, Fleet Street.

ALSO,

BOROUGH POLITICS; a Comic Drama, in two acts, as represented at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket. Webster and Co., Suffolk Street, Pall Mall.

LONDON:
WILLIAM STEVENS, PRINTER, BELL YARD,
TEMPLE BAR.

Inscribed

To the Author of Virginius;

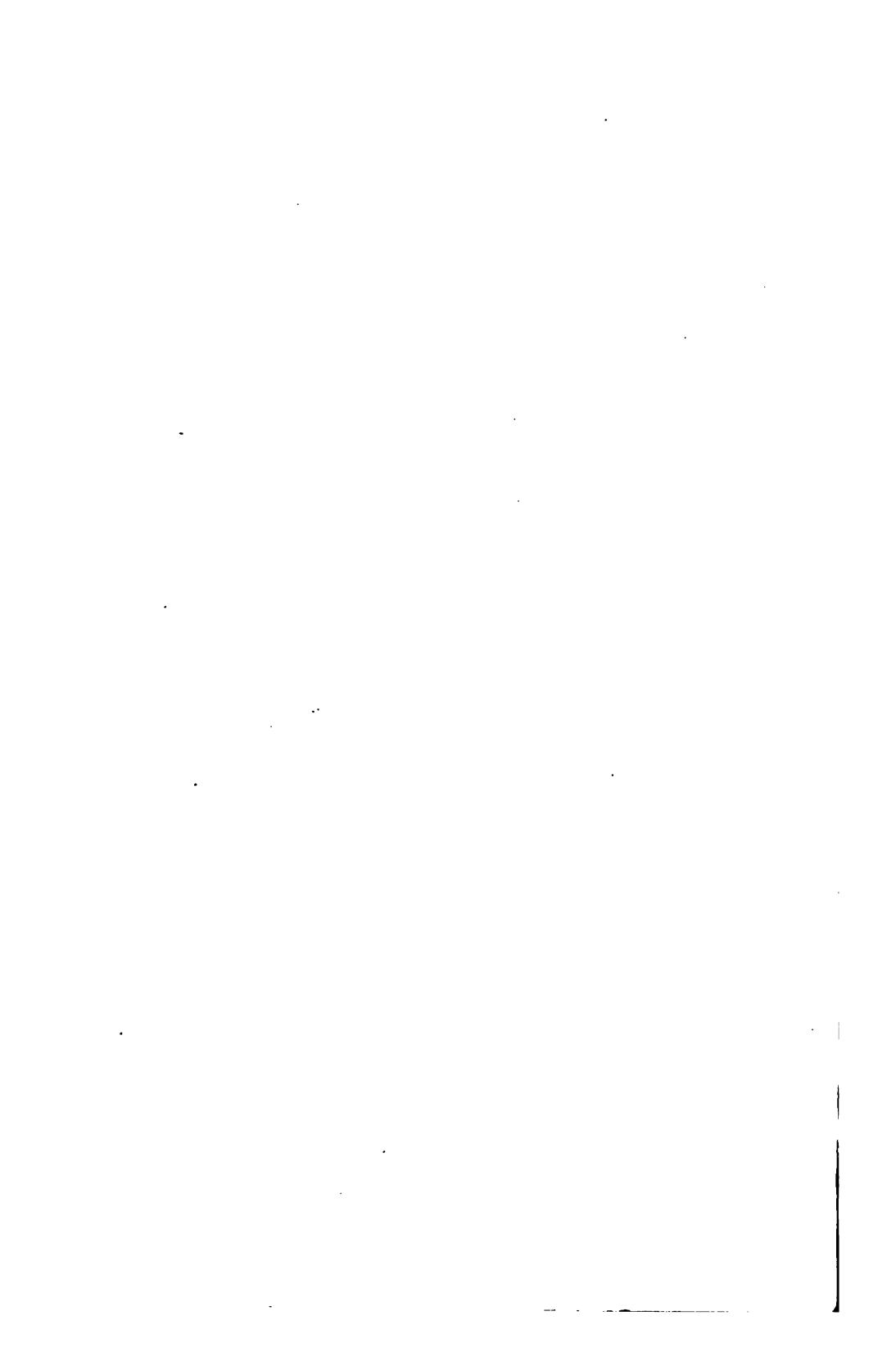
A Student

In the Mystery

WHICH "FINDS THE HEART OUT, BE THERE ONE TO FIND"—

Offers this Tribute

To a Master.



P R E F A C E.

WHATEVER may be the fate of this play, its production—as another evidence of reviving interest in the serious drama—may not be wholly unacceptable. It is due to MR. WEBSTER to say that he cheerfully accepted the present effort at a time when many difficulties opposed its immediate performance.

To his wish that my experiment should receive every possible aid, I owe the happiness and advantage of finding a second time in Miss HELEN FAUCIT, the delineator of my heroine. It would be going far to assert that any *one* character is peculiarly adapted to an actress who always persuades us that her last assumption is that most suited to her genius. But inasmuch as *Florence Delmar* is an attempt to embody what is noble in woman, I may at least presume a personal sympathy between her and her representative.

To dwell on my debt to the performers—and it will be a large one—would however be unbecoming while the verdict, in my own case, is yet unrecorded. But let me thank them all for that cordial zeal which makes the combined effect required in the production of a play one of its pleasantest characteristics.

London, October, 1847.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET, OCTOBER, 1847.



SIR GEORGE HALLERTON, BART.	.	.	.	Mr. Brindal.
OSBORNE,				Mr. Wigan.
THORNTON,	} His Friends	.	.	Mr. Howe.
VIVIAN TEMPLE,		.	.	Mr. Creswick.
WALTER ASHBOOKE, a Student, and Cousin of FLORENCE DELMAR	.	.	.	Mr. H. Vandenhoff.
TRANSIT, Steward of Sir George Hallerton	.	.	.	Mr. Gough.
LAURA HALLERTON, Sister of SIR GEORGE,				Miss Julia Bennett.
MRS. DELMAR	.	.	.	Mrs. W. Clifford.
FLORENCE DELMAR, her Daughter	.	.	.	Miss Helen Faucit.
LADY PARABOUT	.	.	.	Mrs. Stanley.
MISS PARABOUT, her Niece	.	.	.	Miss E. Messent.

Guests, Servants, &c. &c.

PERIOD—the latter part of the seventeenth century. SCENE—in first, fourth, and fifth acts, London and the Suburbs; in second and third acts, Sir George Hallerton's country seat.

THE HEART AND THE WORLD.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—A ROOM IN SIR GEORGE HALLERTON'S TOWN HOUSE.

SIR GEORGE HALLERTON AND TRANSIT.

SIR GEORGE (*rising hastily and casting papers to his steward*).

No matter! It must be done, my station—my very credit depend upon it. What can you suggest?

TRANSIT.

Alas! Sir, our resources are exhausted.

SIR GEORGE.

Nay, one remains. Degrading expedient! A prodigal becomes twice a beggar; when necessity has seized his fortunes, how often must he pawn conscience for a full acquittance! (*Aside.*) I tell you, Sir, these are debts of honour that cannot stand without disgrace.

TRANSIT.

Sir George, I lament your position.

SIR GEORGE.

You *lament* it! Show me how to escape from it. To true wit difficulty is not the curb, but the spur. What's a brain that's baffled by a crisis?

TRANSIT.

The quickest wit, Sir, is still debtor to opportunity. The very fox has his chance from the huntsmen; but, here the hounds are on us before we start!

SIR GEORGE.

Reserve your smartness. Five years ago, I was a man of feeling and principle;—nay, marked for dis-

tinction ;—esteemed a generous friend—an indulgent master. Now! (*Aside.*) There's my Irish timber?

TRANSIT.

Felled, Sir, to the last tree.

SIR GEORGE.

My Yorkshire lands?

TRANSIT.

Mortgaged to the furthest acre.

SIR GEORGE.

You deliver yourself pungently. Begone! Take with thee, those detestable remembrancers. That doleful face might illustrate the *Bankrupt's Gazette*. Begone, Sir!

[TRANSIT goes out.

SIR GEORGE.

Ruin and disgrace so near, and but one alternative! Bitter need; yet being need, I will embrace it. My sister shall marry this wealthy prodigy,—Temple. Though obscure, he is well derived; and, thanks to that Croesus uncle who through life denied him assistance, endowed with princely revenues. As yet, un-disciplined to artificial life, his romantic nature has already piqued Laura's ambition. Though impulsive and enthusiastic, he is, if I err not, vain and aspiring; —cannot long resist her captivation. Yet, should she in the end discard him, as is her custom with the subdued vassals of her beauty? That must be looked to. I fear she yet retains too tender a recollection of the penniless student whom I compelled her to dismiss. Psha! 'Tis my will that Temple wed her. On such a bride the settlements should be munificent—the pin-money itself a fortune; once secure in her affluence, 'twere but sisterly duty to apply it to a brother's rescue.

Enter OSBORNE, THORNTON, and TEMPLE.

OSBORNE.

Nay, faith, he shall hear all! I cannot teach him, Sir George, the art of declining an inconvenient acquaintance. We met an insolent fellow who, on the

strength of some casual encounter with Vivian a year ago, presumed to accost him on the open Mall.

THORNTON.

One Ashbrooke, who labours under the delusion that he can make the world wiser. You patronised him I think for a week in the country. (*He sits.*)

SIR GEORGE.

An amiable visionary.

THORNTON.

He believes in patriotic ministers, constant women, and other mythological traditions (*languidly*).

OSBORNE.

Positive derangement! Why is he at liberty?

THORNTON.

Because the lunacy's harmless. The mania of philanthropy is fatal to none but its possessor.

OSBORNE.

Such men are curious relics of past barbarism; but as for these days, odsbud, even Temple blushed to encounter him!

TEMPLE.

He detected me in your company.

OSBORNE.

You improve. But this Ashbrooke—

TEMPLE.

Is as generous and high-hearted as your estimate of him is unworthy and absurd. The circle that disclaims him, loses more in his one omission than it possesses in its whole combination. His wisdom is only unappreciated because—I mean—that is—Sir!

OSBORNE.

Your elocution's passable; but you commence in too high a key. Come! you are ready to laugh at your own folly.

THORNTON.

From what obsolete writer did you extract your matter?

OSBORNE.

Prithee in what century did he flourish?

TEMPLE.

Sir, I will not suffer—

OSBORNE.

Mark now the contest between the fire in his eye, and the laugh that already quivers on his lip! Faith, thou *shalt* laugh. A man of thy condition! Fashion's most promising neophyte! That under lip positively twitches. Nay, give way!

(*Laughter, in which TEMPLE faintly joins.*)

TEMPLE.

What spell is this that degrades me against my will? (*Aside.*)

SIR GEORGE.

This man is not proof against ridicule. He would be a hero without the risk of becoming a martyr. (*Aside.*)

OSBORNE (*to Temple.*)

Come! take heart; I shall see thee a Man of Quality yet. Here's Thornton—my specimen pupil—who under my tutorage has graduated to the rank of *Doctor Doc-tissimus* in the College of Love. The list of his victims is—pardon me—nearly as long as that of your creditors. (*To SIR GEORGE.*)

THORNTON.

Now you afflict me. How have I incurred these imputations?

OSBORNE.

You may go through his triumphs alphabetically, from A—Amarylla, to Z—Zephyrina. Wouldst deny it?

THORNTON.

Get thee hence for a scandal-monger.

OSBORNE.

Scandal, is't? Zephyrina frowns then!

THORNTON.

Thou art ever in ambush for a weakness;— a moving Gazette of Frailty. Fie! Fie!

OSBORNE (*drawing Temple aside.*)

To what a pass has refinement brought us. Your gallant of last century was never weary of reporting his successes. Our ingenious Lotharios publish their victories by *disclaimers*; and ruin innocence by affecting to shield it.

TEMPLE.

As Thornton's friend, you should not—even in jest—accuse him of such infamy.

OSBORNE.

Infamy! Such immoderate epithets distress me.

TEMPLE.

What softer appellation do you give to vice?

OSBORNE.

Vice, Sir, is—ill-breeding. Vice is the raw, coarse material of character. Virtue—the delicate fabric wrought out of it. As there are reptiles offensive to the eye, which your French cook converts into a bait for the epicure; so the deed which shocks you in the clown, becomes an elegant accomplishment in the man of fashion, and gives a zest to polite society.

TEMPLE.

And this is its morality?

OSBORNE.

Do not rail at it. 'Tis a pleasant code. Nay, here comes one who might reconcile it to a cynic.

(Enter LAURA.)

Thou art touched! Eh?

TEMPLE.

His very praise seems to profane her beauty. She is indeed peerless! (*Aside.*)

LAURA.

Fortune is kind to-day. I desired your judgment on a *bijou* I am about to add to my cabinet—*The Graces from the Antique.* (To TEMPLE.)

TEMPLE.

I should be unjust—I could not resist. (*Confused.*) I fear I should contrast them with a model more perfect than the Sculptor's.

OSBORNE.

He does credit to his preceptor.

THORNTON.

Less effort. Your compliment should *glide* on the stream of discourse to the feet of your charmer. To labour is to ply your oars unskilfully, and to dash the spray in her face. (*Apart to TEMPLE.*)

LAURA.

I rate, Sir, your courtesy at its worth. You had been no less obliging to the cynosure of last night's masquerade.

THORNTON.

The fair unknown, about whom the world so unreasonably went mad?

OSBORNE.

The symmetry of a may-pole!

THORNTON.

The grace of a hoyden!

TEMPLE.

I never witnessed a more enchanting manner. (*Aside.*) She's web-footed—is she not?

THORNTON.

Round-shouldered I'm sure she is.

LAURA.

And yet, they say she had many men of undoubted fashion at those web-feet of hers.

THORNTON.

No doubt; she wore diamond buckles in her shoes.

LAURA.

True; then her courtesy in the minuet.

OSBORNE.

As though she went on wires.

LAURA.

So. (*Caricatures a courtesy.*)

THORNTON.

And her laugh!

LAURA.

A scream in hystericks. Ha, ha, ha!

(*Laughs in mimicry.*)

OSBORNE.

To the life !

THORNTON.

'Twas discreet in her to wear her mask all night.

LAURA.

You are right.

OSBORNE.

Then the vulgar ostentation of her bracelet !

THORNTON.

Monstrous ill chosen.

LAURA.

No, there I protest ! Say what you will of myself ;
but do not—do not calumniate my bracelet !

(Draws it from her reticule, and clasps it on her arm.)

THORNTON. } (Simultaneously.)
OSBORNE. }

Yours !—You the incognita !

LAURA.

Has flattery no blush ?

OSBORNE.

Hem ! But, Madam, your face was concealed by
your mask. Can you wonder that we should judge
blindly of beauty when its sun was under an eclipse ?

LAURA.

Does the ornament become my arm ? (To TEMPLE.)

TEMPLER.

In truth, lady, not more so than that simple ruffle.

LAURA.

My ruffle ! 'Tis the work of a delicate hand. To
be serious—the history of this little ruffle has much
moved and interested me. 'Twas wrought for my
milliner by a noble girl whose mother some months
since, by the death of her husband, and the delay and
expense of an unjust law-suit, has been suddenly re-
duced from a modest competence, to extreme destitu-
tion. Her daughter—the child of a merchant residing
in the country, was admitted to be the frequent com-
panion of my girlhood.

TEMPLE.

Your tale interests me much.

LAURA.

If inferior in position to her friend—'twas but another proof that the law of fortune is not that of desert. There are few whom I have more esteemed and regarded than Florence Delmar.

TEMPLE.

Florence Delmar! (*Aside.*) Did you say Florence Delmar?

LAURA.

You would remember her name. You feel for her reverses. Perhaps, he may aid her. (*Aside.*) I became but yesterday, and by mere chance, apprised of her misfortunes. She shall not want a home while mine can shelter her. I have invited her to our country place, which you and our friends here, have promised to honour shortly with your presence. My guests will respect her for my sake. (*With emphasis.*)

TEMPLE.

Respect her! Destitute, did you say?—Heartless and thoughtless! that my sudden elevation, these frivolous scenes, and—shall I own it—the artificial charm of town beauty should have induced me to neglect her! Desert her in misfortune! Her pure image rises before me in tender reproachfulness. I will break through this false enchantment. I will find out her abode. Every moment's delay upbraids me. (*Aside.*)

LAURA.

He is given to these reveries. (*Aside.*)

TEMPLE.

In town! the cause of her silence is explained. (*Aside.*) Farewell, Miss Hallerton; I have just recalled urgent business. Sir George, good morning!

LAURA.

You will visit our poor rout to-night?

TEMPLE.

I fear that pleasure will be denied me.

LAURA.

Or superseded by a greater?

TEMPLE.

Yes, no!—I did not mean—

LAURA (*piqued*).

Do not retract, Sir. I like honesty. Yet I had counted on you.

TEMPLE.

She is offended. (*Aside.*) My affairs are most pressing. (*He bows.*)

THORNTON.

What abrupt whim is this? (*Apart to OSBORNE.*)

OSBORNE.

We must discover. Stay, Vivian, our roads lie together. We were about to move. (*TEMPLE goes out.*) What haste! Till to-night, madam, yours in loyalty; till to-night, George. (*OSBORNE and THORNTON follow TEMPLE out.*)

SIR GEORGE.

So, fair sister, your favourite courtier seems disposed to rebellion.

LAURA.

My sovereignty can suffer little from his defection.
(*She sits.*)

SIR GEORGE.

Of that, *you* can best judge. In your empire, rebellion is at least a novelty. I always thought your new subject would prove intractable.

LAURA.

"Tis five o'clock, Sir George.

SIR GEORGE.

Five o'clock! Twilight follows on the heels of daybreak. I commend you to your councils with your milliner.
[*Sir GEORGE goes out.*

LAURA.

And time flies with him. With me, how tardily it creeps. Yes! in spite of admiration and success, I am oppressed by the tedium of existence. It might have been otherwise. The fondest dream of my heart

sacrificed to a brother's ambition, I am become ——
But why invoke the remembrance that tortures ?
Life must have occupation. (*Rising.*) I will bring
this stubborn Temple to his knee,—extort from him
the homage he alone withholds. I will outshine my-
self to-night ; enchain the free ; and rivet anew the
fetters of the bound. And now to prepare for the
(She goes out.)

SCENE II.—AN APARTMENT, NEAT, BUT POORLY
FURNISHED, IN THE SUBURBS OF LONDON.

WALTER ASHBOOKE ; and Mrs. DELMAR, *who walks
anxiously to the window.*

WALTER (*laying aside a book.*)

Dear Aunt, I am persuaded of her safety, So long
an absence but proves that her noble efforts have suc-
ceeded.

MRS. DELMAR.

"Tis already dusk, and she alone in this vast and
heartless city ! Twill soon be deep night. She pro-
mised to return in an hour.

WALTER.

And declined my escort. She has of late been jea-
lous of her solitude.

MRS. DELMAR.

She fears to intrude on your studies. You apply
yourself too closely, dear Walter. Your cheek loses
its freshness ; your step its firmness. And after all
what avails thy toil ?

WALTER.

To prompt high aims ; to comfort sorrow ; to cherish
love.

MRS. DELMAR.

So unfortunate ; yet so hopeful.

WALTER.

I have my griefs ; but the life that may serve others

can never be worthless to its possessor. Nor does the world always neglect its benefactors. How happy, dear Aunt, should my success aid the amelioration of our fortunes! The same costly barrier of law withstands at present the assertion of our common rights. But, fear not.

MRS. DELMAR.

'Tis the motto of youth. What can detain thy cousin? Heaven preserve her. 'Twas a sin to repine at poverty while so dear a treasure was left me. Did I lose her! Hush! Ah, the music of that footfall—'tis she! Thank God!

Enter FLORENCE.

FLORENCE.

Dear Mother! dear Walter! how dark; you flit before me like shadows. But my heart will guide me to your arms. (*She embraces Mrs. DELMAR. Lights are placed on the table.*)

FLORENCE (*as she lays aside her hat and mantle*).

Come! ask the result of my travels. Do not fear; Providence has blessed us, my Mother! (*Giving a purse.*) Take this; it contains two of the brightest guineas. Their burnished faces seemed to smile on me, as if they knew the happiness they brought. Throughout the winter and the spring I may hope to dispose of all my embroidery. On Tuesday, I am to receive the price of my sketches. Have we not cause for gratitude?

MRS. DELMAR.

And all this gained by thy toil and humility! My cherished one; so softly tended! Ah, amidst all my thankfulness, the pang of necessity wounds me through thee!

FLORENCE.

Do not say so. I could bless the trials that permit me, not to repay, but acknowledge thy love. And our horizon clears. Hope and affection convert labour into delight. Do they not, Walter? Dear Mother, we'll have our old Grange back again yet. We shall again

loiter on summer evenings beneath the old elms. column-like, sustaining their dome of emerald. On winter nights thine antique chair shall yet stand in its dark brightness, by the hearth, round which shall gather our dear, familiar friends.

MRS. DELMAR.

Friends! You forget, child, that we are fallen.

FLORENCE.

Our *fortunes* are, not *we*.

MRS. DELMAR.

'Tis the same thing in the great world.

FLORENCE.

The great world's then too narrow for me to breathe in.

WALTER.

So say I! How true are the instincts of her heart!
(*Aside.*)

FLORENCE.

You wrong our friends, dear Mother. But this morning how kind a greeting came from Laura Hallerton: how warm a welcome to her country home. I must prize her kindness, though I cannot use it. Generous Laura! You knew her, Walter?

WALTER.

Knew her. Ah, would that I had never known her, or knowing, could forget. Yes, I knew her! (*Aside.*)

MRS. DELMAR.

Accept her hospitality. For thy sake, I'd have it proved that we are not entirely abandoned. Stay!— Thou must not go. By report she's much changed, and I would not have thee meet one who, 'tis said, frequents her house.

FLORENCE.

Oh, she would entertain none whom you would have me avoid.

MRS. DELMAR.

One 'twould pain thee to meet.

FLORENCE.

Her name? or *his* name?

MRS. DELMAR.

I am loath to name him.

FLORENCE.

One 'twould pain me to meet!

MRS. DELMAR.

Yes; he who forgets in fortune's promotion, the
vows of his obscurity. Thou knowest now.

FLORENCE (*hesitating*).

No,—dear Madam—no.

MRS. DELMAR.

Plainly then I speak of Vivian Temple.

FLORENCE.

Do not judge him harshly. He has not heard of
our reverses.

MRS. DELMAR.

Nor sought to hear.

FLORENCE.

Is this just? He cannot have heard! (*Aside.*)
Consider the rapid change in his affairs; the thousand
occupations it brought; his absence from England;
the sudden calamities which drove us from our country
home. He needs but to be reminded.

MRS. DELMAR.

Ah! my child,—he who must be *reminded* of thy
affection never deserved it.

FLORENCE.

My affection!

MRS. DELMAR.

For months his whole life was a protest of his own.

FLORENCE.

Of his friendship!

MRS. DELMAR.

Friendship!

He trifled with thy *love*—

FLORENCE.

You do not know him!

MRS. DELMAR.

He coldly trifled—

FLORENCE.

Mother !

MRS. DELMAR.

Basely !

FLORENCE (*much moved*).

No !

Have I deserved this ?

MRS. DELMAR.

I was rash ;—and yet

What tells the earnest pleading of thy look ?

FLORENCE.

He of our past was part. We knew him, Mother,
Ere care had warned our joy, it was but brief.
We knew him, honour'd him, admir'd—

MRS. DELMAR.

And lov'd !

FLORENCE.

Say loved ! Ah, let us never deem that friend
Link'd with those early memories, can forsake !
Wer't so—I would not know it. Oh ! to breathe
Coldly the name lips of their freight o'er proud,
Could scarcely falter once ;—to see the face
Once with such radiance bright, Thought turned to seek
Relief from light's excess, to blankness wane—
Pluck up such early trust!—If it must die
Let it fade slowly—wither leaf by leaf,
And tint by tint; but let no cruel hand
Tear from the heart the root of its best bliss—
The faith that grows in childhood !

MRS. DELMAR.

Is the hand

Cruel, my child, that but unveils delusion ?

FLORENCE.

Oh ! blest is the delusion that still trusts
Though in a phantom ;—and the truth accus'd,
That wakes us to exclaim, “ ‘Twas all a dream !”
—Mother, forgive this !

(*Taking Mrs. DELMAR's hand.*)

MRS. DELMAR.

Sweet, be calm.

FLORENCE.

I will.

The true ne'er cause regret; the false deserve none.

I'm calm—My frame—where laid I it?—'Tis here.

(She takes her frame, sits, and commences her work.)

WALTER (after a pause, to MRS. DELMAR),
 Mark you? Her thought and eye are far apart.
 Her glance would feign intentness on her task—
 Denies her bidding oft to read the air.
 See how her hand—its purpose midway lost—
 Suspends its effort! Note its listless fall.

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

A letter, please you!

(She places it near FLORENCE and withdraws.)

MRS. DELMAR.

Florence, 'tis for thee—
 For thee, my darling!—Wake!—A letter!

(Placing it in her hand.)

Oh!— FLORENCE (apathetically).

Yes—true!

MRS. DELMAR.

More haste—I'm curious!

FLORENCE (glancing at the superscription).

What!

No!—Hush!—(opening and perusing it.) I have not
 conjured with desire.

'Tis real—tis real!

MRS. DELMAR.

This agitation;—tears!

Are they of grief or rapture? Speak!

WALTER.

Perhaps,

These news demand your private ear.

FLORENCE.

Stay, Walter—

My all but brother—nought from thee to hide

"Tis but a witness of the truth my heart
Believed without a voucher!—*His*—you guess!

(She reads.)

"What can my beloved Florence think of me? Can her reproach be severer than that of my own heart? And yet circumstances have been untoward. Florence, the tidings of your privation, and your heroic endurance have but reached me within this hour." Do you hear? within this hour! *"Your delay to answer my letter acquainting you with the change in my prospects, and of my hope shortly to entrust them to your ear, is now explained."* He wrote then! you hear, he wrote! *"To-morrow—(I say to-morrow for your sake, and that you may not be startled by my abruptness)—to-morrow I will reveal to you aspirations long indulged, hopes long cherished in secret, but which till now, my poverty forbade me to utter. Florence, my own Florence—will you" . . . "will you" . . . "will you."* Read it, Mother!

MRS. DELMAR (resuming the letter).

"Will you by your sympathy animate me to the tasks which bring men honour—which must be noble if you can approve them; and crown effort by the love which were triumph's richest prize, and failure's dearest consolation? Believe ever in the truth of

VIVIAN TEMPLE."

MRS. DELMAR.

A mother's blessing on thee!

WALTER.

Joy, dear Florence!

MRS. DELMAR.

Well hath he conquer'd censure. I was harsh.
Now art thou free to love him.

FLORENCE (falling on her mother's neck).
And to honour.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—GROUNDS IN FRONT OF SIR G. HALERTON'S COUNTRY MANSION. RUSTIC CHAIRS ARE PLACED IN THE PRINCIPAL WALK.

Enter TEMPLE and FLORENCE.

TEMPLE (*looking back*).
Hist! Are we obsrved?

FLORENCE.

There are none near; but were there—dost thou fear observation? Art thou ashamed of the love which thou hast told me was thy pride?

TEMPLE.

'Tis my pride in thy love which prompts this concealment. We are not in thy native grange, though so near it; but the guests of a man of fashion at his country seat.

FLORENCE.

And does the heart change with the scene?

TEMPLE.

No, sweet; but the manners do. We are surrounded by those who would jest at thy devotion.

FLORENCE.

Except Laura Hallerton!

TEMPLE.

I would not tempt her by admitting her to our secret. (*Earnestly.*)

FLORENCE.

Nay, love; you guard me too tenderly. I could brave a laugh for you. But trust me, Laura would not laugh. She too much values and admires thee.

TEMPLE.

What!—nay—you would play upon my vanity!
admire me!

FLORENCE.

Is it so strange? Do not I? But see, she comes.

*Enter LAURA and SIR GEORGE, followed by OSBORNE
and THORNTON, LADY PARABOUT, MISS PARABOUT,
and other guests.*

LAURA.

Ah, *ma mignonne!* the favourite spot.

FLORENCE.

I have ever loved it, the quiet valley circled by the
hills—Strength guarding Beauty!

OSBORNE.

Ecod, George, you're a happy fellow—

SIR GEORGE.

Am I?—A mortgage to two-thirds of their value,
considerably qualifies a man's pride in his estates.
(Aside.)

LAURA.

The view pleases you? (*To TEMPLE.*)

TEMPLE.

Nature, Madam, dreamed of your coming, and ex-
hausted her beauty for your reception.

MISS PARABOUT.

La; how I envy Miss Hallerton! No one compli-
ments me. (*Apart to LADY PARABOUT.*)

LADY PARABOUT.

Poh, child! What are you, or she either, but June
peaches? Young men now-a-days, have a perfect
mania for green fruit. Their forefathers preferred the
ripe flavour of autumn.

MISS PARABOUT.

But, Aunt Parabout!

LADY PARABOUT.

Lady Parabout, child.

MISS PARABOUT.

I thought you would like *Aunt* better. It sounds
such a ripe autumn word.

LADY PARABOUT.

Hush, malapert ! It's a bad world. Keep your eyes open and tell me what you observe. Ah, I suspect !—If I chose !—It's a dangerous world.

(During this dialogue between LADY PARABOUT and her niece, the rest converse in the back; TEMPLE with LAURA, THORNTON with FLORENCE, who receives him graciously, but eventually turns from him with hauteur.)

LAURA.

Nay; I dare not hazard discourse with you in this vein. (To TEMPLE.) Ladies !

(All go out but TEMPLE, to whom, as she retires, LAURA turns with a gracious inclination.)

TEMPLE (looking after her).

The subtle spirit, fascination, dwells
In every movement and infects with grace
The meanest thing she touches ! Robe, plume, nay
The very glove she casts aside, retain
The witchery of her form. But, this is ill.
Where hearts are pledged, the eye should not be free.
My lot is cast, nor will I e'er repent
The vow that binds me to thine excellency,
My simple, faithful Florence ! There's no joy
But comes to earth enveloped in a dream
Which, though it leave a solid good behind,
Is in itself more fair. " Could we but grasp
" Those evanescent glories ! But of life
" The law is change, and each recurrent sun
" Dawns on decayed delights and new desires ! "

Enter SIR GEORGE, OSBORNE, THORNTON and
TEMPLE.

OSBORNE.

Her mien, though gentle in repose, is at times more like that of a duchess than a dependant. With what dignity she repulsed thee. The *Preux Chevalier* of the day—repulsed by a sempstress.

THORNTON.

Repulsed by her publicly ! She shall atone my disgrace. I will learn whether she be invincible. (Aside.)

A sempstress! She might have amassed a fortune had she remained one, and manufactured ruffles for gallants. Imagine those roseate fingers spanning one's wrist for a measure!—Eh, Temple?

TEMPLE.

I could strike him. Yet to expose my secret! (*Aside.*) Is it your custom in the presence of the host to insult his guests?

THORNTON.

Oh! the lady's ear has been pampered already. No wonder 'tis fastidious. (*Aside.*)

SIR GEORGE.

Fie, fie, Sir! You should temper your mirth with discretion.—Such agitation proves too deep an interest for friendship. His love for this girl were death to my hopes; I have staked all on my project of uniting him to Laura! (*Aside.*)

OSBORNE.

Vivian loathes, I know, to hear beauty commended. Frigid himself, he censures fire in others. Prithee now, what is thine idea of a woman?

TEMPLE.

She's a riddle—Nature's paragon, and the burthen of an epigram; the priestess who consecrates life; and an idler's pastime. By her beauty—the brave man's inspiration; by her helplessness—the coward's jest. You can vouch, I think, for the truth of the definition.

OSBORNE.

Oblige me by repeating it. That enchanting Florence distracted my thoughts.

TEMPLE.

Name her less familiarly! you speak to her friend.

OSBORNE.

Thyself!

THORNTON.

A disinterested friend—doubtless!

TEMPLE.

Virtue and Beauty are the friends of all men who have feeling and honour.

OSBORNE.

Give me Beauty by herself, who is the friend of all men without exception.

THORNTON (*aside*).

Could I shame him from his passion, the great barrier to my success were surmounted. (*A loud.*) Disinterested friend ! Get a lawful title, man, to be her champion. Pay the penalty of wedlock for monopoly. Ha, ha, ha !

OSBORNE.

And we will subscribe to have them wrought in embroidery. They shall hang over our grandmothers' mantel-pieces. *Damon and Chloe—the faithful Swain and Shepherdess ; or, the Pattern for Lovers !*

TEMPLE.

That I were free from this restraint. (*Aside.*) You presume on our acquaintance.

OSBORNE.

Come, Thornton ! A man who can't be witty in his ill-humour wants the only excuse for it.

THORNTON.

Have with you !

[*Exeunt THORNTON and OSBORNE.*

TEMPLE.

I marvel you endure this !

SIR GEORGE.

Nay, you are too impatient; they did but jest. Marry my sister's pretty dependant ! Ha, ha, ha !

TEMPLE.

Ran my will so, who should thwart it ?

SIR GEORGE.

A busy-body that always interferes, and can never be called to account—The World, my friend.

TEMPLE.

Why ? How ? By what right ? But I can meet its frown.

SIR GEORGE.

It will not indulge thee with a frown. Thou must brave what is worse—its sneer.

TEMPLE.

What is its title to dictate?

SIR GEORGE.

Its power.

TEMPLE.

Why should I dread it? The World! Private selfishness kept in countenance by numbers. A machine that patents a new morality for every fresh generation. An impostor even on itself! It creates its own echo; and believes in the lie that is constantly reverberated. Severe on the failings of the humble, to preserve the name of virtue, it is satirical upon the excellencies of the good, because it hates the spirit. I have a heart, and scorn it!

SIR GEORGE.

Have a brain, and rule it. Come! thou art ambitious—wouldst achieve distinction—bequeath a name remembered for great service? Be honest.

TEMPLE.

I would rise by desert—the only star of a worthy ambition.

SIR GEORGE.

But one so exalted, that it is only visible through a telescope. The kind glass that brings it near is *influence*. To rule society, you must first court it.

TEMPLE.

Yet I would not even for success play the part of a puppet.

SIR GEORGE.

Bah! Is the mariner the puppet of the winds, because he shifts his sail to their changes, and makes harbour by their very caprices. Would'st thou bear down on the rocks by choice?

TEMPLE.

Not by choice.

SIR GEORGE.

That's rational. Thy course is open; thy future, brilliant. Wealth thou hast,—energy, talent! There wants but one ingredient, *influence*, to complete the

charm. Wed highly; let thy wife's name be dazzling in men's eyes. That's thy card.

TEMPLE.

You put it seriously.

SIR GEORGE.

And it began in a jest. But I love thee, and my sister's interest in thee—

TEMPLE (*involuntarily*).

Thy sister's interest!

SIR GEORGE.

Beshray my tongue! But you will not expose her weakness?

TEMPLE.

Her weakness?

SIR GEORGE.

Worse and worse! My caution plays the traitor. My sister, sir, is proud and counts her reserve her honour. She would not forgive me this imprudence.

TEMPLE.

Gracious lady! Wastes she kind thoughts on one so humble?

SIR GEORGE.

She might not deem them wasted on *thee*. But no more of this; let us seek our friends. I have a wager with Osborne. Come! Are his thoughts on Laura? (*Aside.*) What! absorbed.

TEMPLE.

Oh! pardon me; the beauty of the prospect.

[*They go out.*

SCENE II.—A ROOM ELEGANTLY FURNISHED IN SIR GEORGE HALLERTON'S COUNTRY MANSION. THE APARTMENT, WHICH IS DECORATED WITH SCULPTURE, PAINTINGS, &c., OPENS UPON A TERRACE.

Enter LAURA and FLORENCE.

FLORENCE.

These words are more thy mind's disguise than dress.

LAURA.

Sweet ignorance ! I doubt, love, if thou know'st
What eyes were made for. Tell me now ?

FLORENCE.

To see with.

LAURA.

I thought so. So were feet to walk with, child,
And hands to help one's need. I should have asked
For what *fine* eyes were made.

FLORENCE.

To see with—still.

LAURA.

To see with ! Nay, to dazzle others' sight.
Most bright but fatal weapons woman wields
In strife with man ! Wouldst learn their use—attend.
Display the blithe glance first ; that dares the foe
And tempts him to encounter. Give him time,
Then with a ray as brilliant but as cold
As wintry pleiad's, admiration feed,
But starve his hope ; yet ere it quite die out
Emit a gleam of pity. With a burst
Of sudden glory ravish next his sense
And then bid pride eclipse it. Fold him now
In a soft haze of doubt ; but melt anon
To pathos tender as the streaks of eve.
Lead him from change to change till stubborn will
Be slave to every mood. Then beauty wear
Thy regal mien ; let all thy summer life
Flush thy warm cheek ; and let thy tresses float
Like streaming pennons by the polished curve
Of the proud arm restrained, while pendent swings
The foot in careless freedom, as a breeze
Of triumph swayed it, or as if it scorned
The vanquished heart before it ! (*rises*).

FLORENCE.

But dear Laura—

LAURA.

Florence I wish thee well, and all the more
For fortune's slight—would see thee bravely wed.
I'll help thee to a husband ; but thyself

Must aid my plan. That needs diplomacy,
Tact, forethought, system.

FLORENCE.

And what gain by all ?
Nought worth the keeping. Oh, a lover's heart
Is no beleaguer'd citadel whose walls
Are *mined* to gain a passage ! No ; it waits
To hear its lawful sovereign's trumpet sound,
And with exulting joy flings wide its gates
To let the glory enter. Laura, you
Have felt this surely.

LAURA (*touched*).

Once ! We've all been children,
But we live on and—ringlets would become thy face,
And well contrast thy neck.

FLORENCE.

Oh, be sincere.

LAURA.

Sincerity, girl, in this world, is like gold among the savages, who barter treasure for glass beads. 'Tis a costly quality, but not current money. Men, especially, never deal in it. Not even those who most affect it. Take for instance this Vivian Temple, who in his fortune's sudden rise forgets and casts off his last month's bosom comrades.

FLORENCE.

What ! Vivian Temple
Desert a friend !

LAURA.

I do not blame him, child.

FLORENCE.

Thou art abused. Me, too, this rumour reached.

LAURA.

How didst disprove it ?

FLORENCE.

In his face I gazed—
I heard him speak ; and accusation shrank,
Awed, from his presence !

LAURA.

The preceptor's name
Who taught thee rhetoric ?

FLORENCE.

Justice.

LAURA.

Pity, too,
She did not teach thee reason!—Whence that blush?

FLORENCE.

'Tis shame's at wrong.

LAURA.

Wrong?

FLORENCE.

Wrong most deep....
The slander's foul that clouds the meanest light
In virtue's heaven; but when it stains the disk
Of greatness, doubly foul—darkening the earth,
While it obscures the sun!

LAURA.

You're strong in tropes;
Your client owes you thanks.

FLORENCE.

No thanks; I erred—
Pleading for him who towers above assault.
—Lady, your leave awhile. (*LAURA inclines her head haughtily, and FLORENCE goes out.*)

LAURA.

So, timorous bird,
That tremblest on the wrist, and droop'st thy head
As the noon dazzled thee! With glance oblique,
Do'st calculate a flight where quarry soars
Well nigh beyond *my* swoop? The only man,
I burn to humble—whose one overthrow
Were to my beauty, tribute all my train
Of vapid flatterers ne'er tithed for worth—
He taken in *thy* toils!—Thine may he be
When I have cast him off! For still *my* heart
That yearns for triumph, pines in victory;
One memory yet intruding. But this pride,
I've sworn to tame. “How? Languor, majesty
“That scatters affluent smiles, nor turns to see
“Who profits by the largess; archness, wit,—
“These are spent shafts.” Now will I dip my point
In tenderness, and at that crevice—flaw

In man's completest mail—his vanity,
Address my dart. Scorn on ! Thy fate is near.

[*She goes out.*

Enter TEMPLE and SIR GEORGE.

SIR GEORGE.

You'll not then with us to the morning's sport.

TEMPLE.

Think me not churlish ; there's an idleness
Of spirit on me. (*He sits.*)

SIR GEORGE.

Rather say a fever. (*Aside.*)
Indulge it ; so 'twill die of plethora. [*He goes out.*

TEMPLE (*rising*).

I cannot bar her image from my thought.
Here too hath art shaped in her costlier mould,
The vision of the Carthaginian Queen. (*Advances to a
statue of Dido.*)

Oh, stone ! Thou hast more life than breathing forms,
Save hers thou copiest. What sorcery
Masters my will and conscience ? In this frame
Two lives are struggling. Now the syren's strain
Allures me unresisting, and anon,
Between its pauses, glides a purer sound,
As 'twere the whisper of some watching star,
The echo of first love. Back ! back, while yet
The finer instinct sways me. I'll from hence.
From hence ? What ! quit the charmed sphere of grace,
Ambition, power—the sun to which all spheres
Beside, are earths ?—Yet, there to live and peril
For honour's show—itself ! The right being clear,
I'll think no more, but act. Who ponders—fails !

(*As he is about to go LAURA re-enters. He turns again
to the statue.*)

LAURA (*after a short pause*).

You must no more peruse my face in stone ;
I love you not to note it—

TEMPLE.

Deign to pardon—

LAURA.

Sir, what offence ?

TEMPLE.

Perhaps an unmeant freedom.

LAURA.

Wait till I banish you. Come, your report
Of this life-mocking semblance?

TEMPLE.

Wondrous skill;
Thy look, mould, gesture, air!

LAURA.

The whole design
Offends me. Round my form the Sculptor throws
The haughty Dido's mantle—she whose step
Of pride—her head discrowned,—proclaimed her
Queen.*

TEMPLE.

'Twas well devised.

LAURA.

You deem then pride becomes me?

TEMPLE.

When you *are* proud; when humble—humbleness;
When mournful—sorrow. Differing qualities
Become thy mind as various garbs reveal
Alike one symmetry.

LAURA.

The ice breaks up;
We'll have the current soon. (*Aside.*) You're as the
rest.You treat me to the opiate,—soothe the child
With flattery's comfit. There might lurk a heart
'Neath all her humours,—but who cares to find it?
And yet I would not have you think me proud.

TEMPLE.

Those gentle tones are subtler than the air,

* I trust that in imputing this haughtiness of carriage to Dido, I have not too far strained the sense of Virgil's exquisite lines—
*Qualis in Eurotæ ripis, aut per juga Cynthi
Exercet Diana choros, quam mille securæ
Hinc atque hinc glomerantur Oreades : illa pharetram
Fert humero, gradiensque Deas supereminet omnes :*
Latonæ, tacitum pertentant gaudia pectus.
Talis erat Dido.—*Aeneid*, B. 1, v. 502.

And steep the brain in music. (*Aside.*)

LAURA (*as if absorbed, and directing her eyes to the statue.*)

There she stands.

Poor lady ! Hapless Queen !

TEMPLE.

You sigh !

LAURA.

A passing thought.

How might her regal port, that thousands awed,
Droop into trembling bashfulness at sight
Of stern *Æneas*, who so slowly learned
A love he learned—to scorn!—Oh, had he fled
Her passion in its dawn !

TEMPLE.

He guessed it not.

LAURA.

He might have done—(for countless heralds, Love
Sends on to sound his coming),—by her voice
Wont to command, yet for *his* ear subdued
To faltering whispers,—by her eye, whose glance
Was silent fate, yet sank beneath his own,
As if its leave to worship were a bliss
Beyond its asking. He was blind ! Be sure
That woman loves who, haughty in the crowd,
Grows humble when with one.

TEMPLE.

So melts her voice—

Her eyes so sink. How to translate this ! Fool !
This dalliance is guilt. My love ! My honour !

(*Aside.*)

LAURA.

Your silence speaks. You deem my flippant lip
Profanes a theme so tender ! Well ; believe me
The gilded emptiness, the costly toy.
The rest account me. I can bear it.

TEMPLE.

I—

I wrong thee, lady ! Oh ! Thou little know'st.

LAURA.

You will not judge me harshly.

TEMPLE.

Harshly!

LAURA.

No,

I'm sure you will not. Thanks! (*Giving her hand.*)

I'm bold; forgive

The heart's glad impulse. I'd control it.

TEMPLE (*retaining her hand*).

Nay;—

The gaoler pines when such fair captive's freed.

LAURA.

The captive mourns to break so kind a chain.

TEMPLE.

How her touch thrills me! Rushes through my veins.
A fire whose pain is transport. (*Aside.*)

Enter FLORENCE suddenly, with a book.

FLORENCE.

Vivian, a boon—dear Vivian,
I'm glad I've found you!

LAURA.

Vivian!—Oh, *your name*.

A signet word of privacy. (*She courtesies and retires.*)

TEMPLE (*aside*).

Dear Vivian!

Rash girl! I warned her too.

FLORENCE.

A boon for Walter.

On favour's doubtful sea, his freight of Thought—
Toil of long days—he ventures. Thine applause—
'Tis fairly earned—how?

TEMPLE.

Your request's mistimed.

I'm vexed—ay, to the core!

FLORENCE.

Could I have guessed,
I had not importuned thee.

TEMPLE.

All's exposed! (*aside*).

FLORENCE.

I've a right to know thy trials.

TEMPLE.

Leave me, Florence.

FLORENCE.

Is it not loss of wealth?

TEMPLE.

No, no!

FLORENCE.

Thou'dst borne
That with a smile. What is't? Our covenant
Of love, though we from common eyes conceal it—
Is valid; is't not—and doth warrant me
To share thy sorrows? Sweet love! (*Laying her hand
on his arm*.)

TEMPLE.

Conscience! Florence,
This irks me! (*She turns dejectedly away*.)
Bear with me, meek Angel; Heaven
Forget me when I—thee! Strain to my heart,
My own true love, my Florence! (*Suddenly follow-
ing and embrasing her*.)

FLORENCE.

I'm too happy!

[*They go out.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—ROOM IN SIR GEORGE HALLERTON'S
COUNTRY HOUSE, AS IN ACT SECOND.

The Scene discovers THORNTON and FLORENCE.

FLORENCE.

You estimate him liberally, as friend should friend.

THORNTON.

I protest, madam, did I seek in bearing, for perfect carriage; in thought, for nicest instinct; in disposition, for generosity and discretion in their equipoise—I should deem my need satisfied in his discovery.

FLORENCE.

So fair a report includes all virtues—benevolence, honour, truth, constancy.

THORNTON.

They abound in Temple.

FLORENCE.

Oh, I do not doubt it.

THORNTON.

You make me happy. But that open volume warns me to retire.

FLORENCE.

You! you were welcome!

THORNTON.

I intended to be so. (*Aside.*) Still absorbed in the same enchanting production! You are rightly proud of your kinsman.

FLORENCE.

Indeed his work merits your commendation.

THORNTON.

Commendation, madam,—transport ! I was of the happy few who heard your cousin's language translated into music.

FLORENCE.

Music ! The tale is written in prose.

THORNTON.

But prose becomes music when *you* read it. Did I not undertake to interest my Lord St. Aubyn for the author ?

FLORENCE.

You were so generous.

THORNTON.

Further—to impress his Lordship's taste—I proposed to furnish him with an evidence of young Ashbrooke's accomplishments. You promised to transcribe for me that exquisite letter which *Clarinda* addresses to *Sir Harry*.

FLORENCE.

When after so much unkindness she at last suspects his constancy ?

THORNTON.

The same.

FLORENCE.

It is already copied.

THORNTON.

It commences ?—

FLORENCE (*reading the copy*).

I ask my reason whether I may still trust you, and it answers—no ; but when I question my heart, it bids me trust you for ever. I have given you my all, but believe—. Have I quoted rightly ? (Gives him the letter.)

THORNTON.

The Muse has dictated to one of the Graces. She read the words as if she felt them. (*Aside, complacently.*) But I go to town this morning. You designed to honour me with a commission.

Enter, behind, OSBORNE, Lady PARABOUT, and Miss PARABOUT. (FLORENCE takes off the ring and presents it to THORNTON.)

FLORENCE.

I did. A stone is lost from my ring—a valued remembrance from Miss Hallerton. Will you bid the jeweller supply the defect?

OSBORNE.

Love tokens! a ring! She gives him what he will never give her. (*Aside.*)

THORNTON.

Appointed to your service, I kiss hands on my promotion. (*Kneels, and kisses her hand.*)

OSBORNE.

At her feet. (*Aside.*)

LADY PARABOUT (*as if shocked, to OSBORNE.*)
I fear, Sir, we intrude.

[Lady PARABOUT, Miss PARABOUT, and OSBORNE go out unobserved.]

FLORENCE (*smiling.*)

I could trust your gallantry, though less ceremony enforced it. When do you go?

THORNTON.

Within two hours. In the meantime, the sun woos us to recreation. I will but ascertain the plans of our hostess, and return to escort her loveliest guest.

[He bows and goes out.

FLORENCE.

How unjust, often, is first impulse. This gentleman, so rich in all qualities of goodness, I had censured as hollow and dissolute. I must atone to him for my former slights. How he glowed in admiration of Vivian! My hope is re-assured.—*Re-assured!* Did I need another's witness to his truth? Yes; I was poor enough to doubt; to suspect the smiles that custom enforced; to wrest torture even from a courtesy. This very morning I had resolved to put my foolish distress

into words. Thank Heaven, they have not been spoken. These tears are sweet, though they condemn me. But I must banish their traces. I will seek him at once. There is no doubt in my heart; he shall find none in my look.

[*She goes out.*

Re-enter THORNTON.

THORNTON.

Gone! Why did I slight opportunity? There is something in this girl which restrains while it invites. Nay she attracts the more by suggesting that she can also repel. I must have a care or I shall be ill-bred enough to love her! However my means prosper. Affecting to admire Temple, I insensibly endear myself. And, what is most to the point, he cools to her hourly. Eh!

Enter OSBORNE.

OSBORNE.

Well, how goes it? Is the charmer still disdainful? What a battery has the enchanting Laura opened upon Temple! No wonder he gives ground. The town lady's coquetry carries it against the country girl's simplicity.

THORNTON.

They are opposites; but perhaps his taste is wide enough to embrace both.

OSBORNE.

No; love, like the sun, shines but on one hemisphere at a time; and the noonday of one woman is necessarily the midnight of her antipodes. But the lady's coldness is too strongly fortified?

THORNTON.

Why, for every frown of last week she deigns me now a lip full of smiles. What of that?

OSBORNE.

Nothing, I vow.

THORNTON.

Gives me sentences of sweet discourse where before she denied syllables. What of that?

OSBORNE.

Still, nothing. Yet he knelt to her unreproved. With what ostentation he parades her pledge. (*Aside.*)— Still nothing ; nor will I credit her surrender on less warrant than her own confession.

THORNTON.

Ha, humph ! Let's change the theme. Thou hast lost thy wager. To-morrow sees me in town. On Wednesday, *Lady Cynthia* meets me in the Park.

OSBORNE.

Impossible !

THORNTON.

Will you believe her summons ?

(*He produces several letters, and presents in mistake the one given by Florence.*)

OSBORNE (*reading*).

I ask my reason whether I may still trust you and it answers no ; but when I question my heart it bids me—

THORNTON.

Hold ! Pardon me—

OSBORNE.

Trust you for ever.

THORNTON.

Stay ! Hear me—what have I done

OSBORNE.

But 'tis not *Lady Cynthia's* character.

THORNTON.

Return it, Sir.

OSBORNE.

Why, 'tis the hand whose free grace was so admired last night—Florence Delmar's.

THORNTON.

Return it, I say ; 'tis an error.

OSBORNE.

Oh, the perjury of a fair face ! (*Returning the letter.*)

THORNTON.

Eh ! What do you mean ?

OSBORNE.

Does this modesty become you ?

THORNTON.

But hear me.

OSBORNE.

Why dissemble ? Do I not know thee ?

THORNTON.

He takes it for an avowal of her passion, and will not be undeceived. Well ; I can bear the imputation. 'Twill be rumoured that she affects me. (*Aside.*) Come ! This is folly. I'll escape ere thou concoct more mischief. The letter *proves* nothing.

OSBORNE.

Oh, nothing ! But you go not alone.

[*They go out.*

SCENE II.—GROUNDS IN FRONT OF THE MANSION,
AS IN ACT SECOND.

Enter on one side FLORENCE and TEMPLE, who listens to her with an air of abstraction. LAURA enters on the opposite side.

LAURA (*glancing at TEMPLE*).

No ; it was not love. The heart that hath once known it rejects the nicest counterfeit. Enough ! I tire. Yet custom bids us secure the triumph. (*Aside.*) Alas ! You look not well. You should more consider yourself—or at least your friends.

FLORENCE.

Indeed, thy cheek looks fevered.

TEMPLE.

The flush of exercise.

LAURA.

Nay, you are agitated and restless.

TEMPLE.

The malady were welcome that obtained me your pity. (*Apart to her.*)

LAURA.

How her eyes follow him. Craft! But thou art matched. (*Aside.*)

TEMPLE.

Oh, the torture of self reproach! (*Aside.*)

Enter OSBORNE, THORNTON, Sir GEORGE, Lady PARA-
BOUT and Miss PARABOUT.

THORNTON.

Miss Delmar here!—Since you have so soon relinquished your author, I fear he has offended your taste.

FLORENCE.

So well pleased it that I would have others partake my enjoyment. Indeed, you should know more of Walter Ashbrooke.

TEMPLE.

Miss Delmar's wishes are commands.

FLORENCE.

So boldly! He turns from me as if in displeasure. (*Aside.*)

LAURA.

Walter! He depend on her favour! This exceeds endurance. (*Aside.*)

SIR GEORGE.

Are you sure of this? He has had letters from her! (*Apart to OSBORNE.*)

OSBORNE.

Passionately conceived too, on the faith of these optics. But this is not all. By the best fortune, as he knelt to her, she investing his finger with a ring, I entered with that Antique Envy,—Lady Parabout.

SIR GEORGE.

Did she comment on this?

OSBORNE.

Wonderfully—with her eye-brow. But see! (*Directing him to the group.*) She has infected the rest with her suspicions. The poor child is already avoided. (*As FLORENCE addresses several guests in turn, they one by one incline to her briefly and coldly, and exchange looks with each other.*)

FLORENCE.

You remember Walter! Long since you predicted the laurel to his genius. Your influence might serve him. (*To LAURA.*)

LAURA.

'Tis unnecessary, fair one. He whom your patronage distinguishes may dispense with mine. Shall we move? (*To the guests.*)

FLORENCE.

There is insult in that tone. All seem to shun me. And he, *he*—permits it. (*Aside.—TEMPLE approaches her.*)

LAURA (*intercepting him*).

I wait you.

THORNTON.

Felicitate me. (*To FLORENCE.* (*The rest move on.*) *Lady PARABOUT drops her scarf.*) But you are pale and tremble? Let me support you. (*She sinks on his arm.*)

THORNTON.

What softness besets my heart! Would she were less confiding. Her very trust reproaches me.

(*Aside.*)

Re-enter Sir GEORGE, OSBORNE, Lady PARABOUT, and Miss PARABOUT.

MISS PARABOUT.

There's the scarf? (*OSBORNE presents it to Lady PARABOUT.*)

FLORENCE (*collecting herself*).

'Twas a moment's dizziness. Thanks, I am recovered.

MISS PARABOUT.

Aunt ! That peach must have grown on the sunny side of the wall. It falls from over-ripeness.

LADY PARABOUT.

They call me censorious. Come little one !

[*Lady PARABOUT and Miss PARABOUT go out, followed by THORNTON and FLORENCE.*

OSBORNE.

Do you credit me, now ? 'Twill to town, Sir, by the next mail. Her ladyship is the very whispering gallery of a scandal.

SIR GEORGE.

I am confounded, but unconvinced.

OSBORNE.

Solve the problem alone. I'll watch the comedy.

[*He goes out.*

SIR GEORGE.

I would not believe what I must suspect. Knows Temple this ? 'Twere at least a friend's duty to warn him. This will I do ;—no more. I must detach him from the rest. My affairs are every moment more urgent. The crisis hangs on the hour.

[*Goes out SIR GEORGE.*

SCENE III.—ROOM IN THE MANSION AS BEFORE.

Enter FLORENCE.

FLORENCE.

I would not doubt, and yet he calmly stood
And heard her make my lowliness reproach.
Fears throng me, gloomy guests, Heaven knows un-
bidden.

Ah ! would Time's ocean ebbed and bore me back
To childhood's realm. Dear early home, my eye
Can from yon terrace dimly trace thy bounds.
There's sweetness in the sad face of the Past !

(*She walks to the window and passes through to the terrace, where she stands as in reverie.*)

Enter SIR GEORGE and TEMPLE.

SIR GEORGE.

I say you have done me wrong. I am a thoughtless man. I may be a weak one; but I can feel for a sister's injury.

TEMPLE.

How have I merited your anger?

SIR GEORGE.

You have not offered your heart to her. True; not in words. But have not the eyes a language? Do not gestures speak? Is there no significance in the glance, in the sigh, in the pressure of the hand? Are not actions oaths? Have not thine pledged thee a thousand times to my sister?

TEMPLE.

Who could see her, and refuse her homage?

SIR GEORGE.

What call you homage? The silent tender of a heart not yours to give! The false—But I am too hasty. You cannot have absolutely committed yourself to so lamentable a fate?

TEMPLE.

Oh! my honour, my honour, Hallerton!

SIR GEORGE.

My sister.

TEMPLE.

Would I had never seen her—never encountered her fatal blandishments—never suffered them to wind into my heart.

SIR GEORGE.

They *have* done so! Nay, do not despair. Florence Delmar may not be inconsolable for thy loss.

TEMPLE.

Peace! Peace!

SIR GEORGE.

Why do I hesitate? 'Tis an obligation of duty. My game, too, must be played. (*Aside.*) Didst mark how she showered her graces on Thornton?

TEMPLE.

That profligate! Beware. One breath of traduction against *her*, and I shall hate thee more than I despise myself.—I may be forsown to my faith, but I will not hear another blaspheme its shrine. There is a sleeping justice in dishonour. Do not rouse it.

SIR GEORGE.

You are choleric; but I bear with you. Your unfortunate position is penalty enough for the thoughtlessness which has incurred it.

TEMPLE.

You have wrung from me my secret. Esteem it sacred!

SIR GEORGE.

Am I not your friend?

TEMPLE.

My friend! Before I knew you, I was poor and humble. Fortune has given me wealth; your society—distinction. But there is a balance against you, Hallerton. I am yet young; but in your circle I have parted with the ardour of youth, its joy, simplicity and faith. All—all are gone, even to the very sense of what I was. It is only by the lightnings of remorse that my blinded conscience gets glimpses of the universe I have lost. My friend!

SIR GEORGE.

Not a word but pierces me! (*Aside.*) You are heated. We will speak further of this. Let us walk.

[*They go out.*

FLORENCE (*coming forward*).

Doubt's over, then: or should be! But my heart Rebels 'gainst sense. Yet this disloyal ear Perform'd its wont too truly. I believe—Now, I believe it all!—The shadows scarce Have lengthen'd since he enter'd. On his march The sun hath scarce progress'd. Still in mid heaven, He flaunts his mocking flag. Still wave the trees. No bird of all yon choir suspends his song. Nature, thy heart is marble! Only earth Is faithful to the wretched.

* * *

(*Taking up a book.*) Walter, Walter !
I deem'd not when with tears I bathed thy page,
Its tale of wither'd hope was prophecy.

Re-enter TEMPLE.

TEMPLE.

I'd be alone ! With vanity and strife
Whirls my vex'd brain. What, Florence !—How
you start !
Why pace you to and fro, disorderly ?

FLORENCE.

I'm calm, Sir. (*She sits.*)

TEMPLE.

What hath moved you ?

FLORENCE.

A stale sorrow,
A woman's wrong. (*Offering the book.*)

TEMPLE (*taking it.*)

You give the fond conceits
Of fancy too much sway. I pray you, Madam,
Follow example and conform your course
To custom, and the fashion of the times. (*Care-
lessly opening the book.*)
What air-spun grief o'erwrought you ?

FLORENCE.

I confess
A common theme. You'd know it ! Years ago
A maiden gave her faith in trust to one
Who after found its custody a burthen.
Fame, courtlier manners, more instructed smiles
Made his vows—fetters. When she heard, she wept
not.
Her whole heart was one frozen tear. Alas !
She was a simple girl, and had not learned
The fashion of the times.

TEMPLE.

A foolish girl !
What she supposed reluctance might be prudence.

FLORENCE.

The fashion of the times calls falsehood so !

TEMPLE.

But he did not desert her !

FLORENCE.

You have read
The story then ?

TEMPLE.

I say, whate'er his sins,
His honour bound him keep the oath he pledged—
He kept his word.

FLORENCE.

And for his *honour's* sake !
Oh, pardon me : he did *not* keep his word.
He vowed a heart whose tribute was its life,
A love should leap to hers like flame to flame !
He gave her—what ? A hesitating hand
Because his *honour* bade him. Oh, she meant
Her love to be his trophy not his chain !

TEMPLE.

He would have wed her. 'Twas his oath's extent.
What could he more than yield the rights she claimed ?

FLORENCE.

The *rights* !

TEMPLE.

Yes ; I concede the rights.

FLORENCE.

The rights of love.
They are so easily phrased—so soon restored ;
Heart-strings a touch untunes, a touch repairs.
• Oh, Sir, thou canst not love ! Love hath no rights,
It doth not know the word. Earth's substance ta'en,
Earth's laws may give thee back. Thy fair repute
Maligned, earth's laws may vindicate. But love
That in it hath no property of earth—
Hath no appeal there. Rights it casts away,
Is proud to be defenceless ; all its bond
The nature it confides in. Break that bond ;
It feels its beggary—but pleads no rights.

TEMPLE.

Madam!—That stately pallor stirs my soul
 More than a Hebe's blush. It is the form
 Haunted my youth; but crowned, as a throne's heir
 Had pass'd into a monarch. (*Aside.*) I concede
 You triumph here! But show the vanquished pity.

FLORENCE.

Ay; pity! There's the loss, that we must learn
 To *pity* what we worshipp'd!—Vivian Temple!
 What is the master-pang—there is but one—
 That wrecks a woman's future? Pours the world
 Scorn on her chosen? Well; she takes *his* hand,
 And drops the world's. Is want that crushing pang?
 I tell thee, when of nights her slender hand
 Smooths his brow's anxious lines, and soul-filled eyes
 Glorify pale, worn faces,—she thanks Heaven
 That taught her, through her very penury,
 How love can grow by suffering. Is it death?

TEMPLE (*breaking in, with much emotion.*).
 No, no!

FLORENCE.

I say no too. Then what?

TEMPLE.
 Oh; nothing, nothing!

FLORENCE.

Yes; *his fall from worth!*
 Faith rides o'er mountain billows by one light
 We deem a star. Prove that a meteor—then,
 We strand, we strand!

TEMPLE (*sinking into a chair.*).
 Florence! Am I that man?
 (*After a pause.*) I merit thy reproach! but wilt deny
 Thy wrong—atonement?

FLORENCE.

Speak not so. Thou couldst not
 Proudly proclaim thy troth.

TEMPLE.

We'll quit this roof.—

Laura's curved lip, her brother's frigid eye,
 And Osborne's blighting laugh! (*Aside.*) We'll quit
 this roof,
 Grant me but time; and—I'll confess. (*Hesitatingly.*)

FLORENCE.

Confess!

Stay; did I hear aright, that you seek time
 To make *confession* of your love?

TEMPLE.

Even so,
 Grant me but time.

FLORENCE.

And you'll *confess* you spent
 Your wealth on such poor merchandise. What, preface
 The marriage rite with blushes? To the altar
 Walk with a crest in mute apology
 Declined for her you lead there? Sir, know this;
 Man may reject our love: 'tis *our* reproach
 If he degrade it!

TEMPLE.

On my knee!

FLORENCE.

I grieve,
 The posture fits you. Rise; I brook not this.

TEMPLE.

Yet, Florence.

FLORENCE.

Rise, Sir! (*Laughter and voices heard without.*)
 List; your courtly friends
 Will see you at my feet. Have you no pride?

TEMPLE.

My pride forbids me not to kneel there!

FLORENCE.

Mine
 Forbids you. Must I claim a stranger's right?

TEMPLE (*rising*).

No; it is given you lady. You have spoken.

Heaven asks no price for pardon, but repentance,
Which you disdain.

FLORENCE.

A breaking heart disdains not. (*Aside.*)

TEMPLE.

Let the past vanish like a fading shore.
I'm on the seas, and chance may take the helm !

(Enter LAURA, *Lady PARABOUT*, *Miss PARABOUT*, Sir
GEORGE, OSBORNE, THORNTON, and other guests.)

LAURA.

How, Truant ! Here ?

TEMPLE.

To my misfortune, lady,
Since you were not ! (With assumed gaiety.)

THORNTON (*offering flowers to FLORENCE*).
By kind acceptance give these frail things worth.

(She mechanically takes them. He offers her escort,
which she mutely declines. All go out except
FLORENCE: she gazes after them for some moments.
The flowers drop from her hand. She quits the room with a step at first irresolute,
but afterwards firm and measured).

END OF THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

[An interval of two months is supposed to elapse between the third and fourth acts.]

SCENE I.—SIR GEORGE HALLERTON'S HOUSE IN LONDON.

Sir George and Laura, who is engaged in writing.

SIR GEORGE.

Out on my haste to bring her back to town,
Where every moment, pompous in its trifles,
Thrusts daily back the urgent suit of prudence. (*Aside.*)
What humour's this? A robe so negligent,
And look so listless, mock the time. Anon
Your suitor and the marriage contract wait you,
As I appointed.

LAURA (*looking up*).

Brother! to be wed
Six weeks' hence, for your pleasure, not mine own,
I yielded. Of the time I bate no second.
I've occupation.

SIR GEORGE.

All my anxious pains
Foiled by her whim! (*Aside.*) Laura!

LAURA.

Before you go,
Pray you that footstool.

SIR GEORGE.

Nay; no trifling! Girl,
Must I entreat thee sign to-night?

LAURA.

Do not;
I grieve to wound entreaty.

SIR GEORGE.

I'll command thee!

LAURA.

You may expend your breath so if you please,
'Twill prove a poor investment.

SIR GEORGE.

Fool!

LAURA (*still writing*).

You're civil.

I'm puzzled here to round a compliment:
Will you instruct me?

SIR GEORGE.

Mince not words for me!

I'm *but* your brother. You perform divinely;
But we're just now behind the curtain.

LAURA.

Else

I'd blush for you. (*Resuming her letter.*)
“Dear Duchess, I accept”—

SIR GEORGE (*seizing her hand*).

“Dear Duchess”—nay, I'll not be rude. The Duchess
Admires thee much!

LAURA.

I'm flatter'd.

SIR GEORGE.

Magnified!

A toast, a rage, an all-ascendant star
In fashion's sky!

LAURA.

You're bounteous.

SIR GEORGE.

This may change.

You may lose admiration.

LAURA.

Not *this* year. (*Surveying herself in a mirror*).

SIR GEORGE.

This *night*, fair sister ; save that contract's signed !
Yes, I'm quite calm.

LAURA.

Sir George, I'll take the chance.

SIR GEORGE.

There is none, Madam.

LAURA.

Then the certainty.
This man I love not. In ungarded hour
Thou didst persuade me !

SIR GEORGE.

In this guarded hour
I must do so. Refuse me ;—into air
Dissolve these stately domes, these pictur'd walls ;
These velvet floors. The sky's thy roof, the bound
Of thy new home—the horizon ! Thou shalt tread
For carpet—stones and shingles ! Nay ; believe
A prodigal's confession.

LAURA.

Brother !

SIR GEORGE.

Add—
My honour, too, depends on thy compliance.

LAURA.

Explain.

SIR GEORGE.

I will. Our all surrendered, I remain
Large debtor to my friends. How came this recks not.
'Twas folly—madness ! Temple proffers thee
An ample portion. Thou must save me, sister !

LAURA.

He knows it ? (*after an enquiring pause.*) No ! oh,
brother !

SIR GEORGE.

Hear me, Laura.
For this last refuge I have schemed, toil'd, borne,
And forborne,—check'd my passion, worn my thought,

Belied my nature ! 'Twas my skill that foil'd
His lowly love for Florence.

LAURA.

Ha !—proceed.

He *loved* her ! That I knew not—deem'd on *him*
She practised wiles. Thou said'st so.

SIR GEORGE.

No ; their love

Bore a long date. One hour her coldness stung him,
I press'd the advantage ; urged him by his honour
To ratify, in words, the vows his acts
Had pledged thee long before.

LAURA.

A worthy plot !

How feel'st thou, Sir ? Elate ? And here's the key
To Temple's change. His heart's remorse hath bred
This reveller's spirit in him. Worthy deed !

SIR GEORGE.

'Twas a base deed. I loathe it. Yet no choice
Between this secret shame, and infamy
For common eyes to gloat on ! Yet not I
Alone sway'd Temple's mind. Perchance this rumour
That Florence's name too closely links with Thornton's
Had its effect.

LAURA.

How !

SIR GEORGE.

Know'st thou not 'tis said
He boasts another triumph in— (*hesitating.*)

LAURA.

Her shame !

The word is easy to pronounce ; why pause ?
Shame ! shame ! a very easy word. Oh ! shame,
Shame on the villain ; on his echo shame !

SIR GEORGE.

What I report I did not mean to vouch,
I do not pledge its truth.

LAURA.

Oh, do you not ?

Except perhaps by silence. Who permits,
Authenticates a slander. Temple knew it!
I'll not believe he knew it. To the earth
He'd dashed the liar! Did she love for this?

SIR GEORGE.

You prate too much of love for one whose life
Hath made a jest of't.

LAURA.

And who taught me? Who
Ploughed up my generous shoots of early faith,
But could not mine their root; for know, my heart
Still cleaves to him you bade my lips disown.
You crush'd the flowers of life; behold its tares!
Its soil is vital and must quicken! You
Should not have said this.

SIR GEORGE.

But you'll sign this contract?

LAURA.

Never!

SIR GEORGE.

You'll see our father's name disgraced?

LAURA.

How flows
His blood in thee—heir of his name, not blood?
In me it speaks. I'd be an outcast, drudge,
Kiss Fortune's scourge, ere lock up in my heart
Such shame to him who gave it power to throb.

SIR GEORGE.

Now, sister, save me or destroy me! For
I will not live scorn's mark and finger point.
I will not—know me sister! Read my face!
I will not. So decide. (*Going.*)

LAURA.

Stay!

SIR GEORGE.

You require
An hour for thought, I give it.

[*He goes out.*

LAURA.

Oh, the strait

Where error drives us ! Save a brother's fame
And life by shame ! Not shame ! Once Temple's wife,
I'd be so duteous, tender.—Ah, returns
The thought of Florence ! Thrive upon the spoil
Torn from her breast ! Not that ! Still loves she
him ?

(With sudden resolution.) I'll see her, prove her ! If
she love, I'm firm. [She goes out.

SCENE II.—MRS. DELMAR'S APARTMENT AS IN ACT
I. AN APPEARANCE OF GREATER COMFORT AND
PROSPERITY IS VISIBLE IN THE APARTMENT.

WALTER, *Mrs. Delmar and Florence.*

MRS. DELMAR.

But child, you would make us so happy ! At any
time this union should have delighted us. Now it
promises deliverance. What ribald tongue shall assail
thee when Walter's wife ? You crush this calumny
when you wed him.

FLORENCE.

No, Mother ! I divide it with him. I will never
wed with suspicion for my dowry.

WALTER.

To divide grief is the prerogative of Love. Annul
it, and you dethrone him.

FLORENCE.

All sovereigns have one monopoly. Love's is
sorrow.

MRS. DELMAR.

'Twill break thy heart. Thou hast not shed a tear
since that bitter night—

FLORENCE.

When my gay acquaintance stood aloof and I

became a solitude in a crowd. Nay, beloved, know your Florence better. We give falsehood warrant, suffering it to move us. We will not honour it by a sigh.

WALTER.

Nor let it print its trace on our faces? Ah, Florence!

FLORENCE.

Change and quiet—the soft air of the South will restore me.

WALTER.

Oh Love, give me title to go with thee.

MRS. DELMAR.

Hear him, Florence;—for my sake! Thou canst not harbour one thought of him thou hast renounced? Nay, I would not pain thee! But think of Walter's claims; I speak not of his genius, but of his goodness. Has he not been faithful alike in trial and success? Who recovered for us the rights which fraud and power so long withheld? To whom do we owe these comforts?

WALTER.

Plead not thus. Affection is a boon—not a debt.

FLORENCE.

He deserves more than I can give him—all the heart.

MRS. DELMAR.

What would'st thou not do for him?

FLORENCE.

Pray for him, bless him, toil for him, die for him.

MRS. DELMAR.

This is caprice.

You bear him such regard, yet do not love him?

FLORENCE.

Oh! speech is poor to paint a difference
I feel so vast! Trust, honour, tenderness—
The all that friendship asks—compose not love!
Friendship still keeps distinction. Friends are twain,
But lovers one!

Friends are two kings in dear confederance join'd,
That still rule *separate* empires ; but in love
Both realms united, take one name, one tongue,
One law, one faith, one consequence, one crown !
Friends are two banks a kindly stream divides ;
Lovers—twin clouds into each other blent
And bath'd in the same beam. Friends are like trees
That stand with arms enlaced but parted roots ;
But that we love is grafted on one stem,
Fed with our sap, and nurtur'd by our dews,
And wither'd in our blight !

WALTER.

True ; let me pause.
The sun's eclipsed that woke to bursting flower
My passion's seeds and scorched it. Do I well
To hang a withered garland on this altar ? (*Aside.*)
And yet my name would shield her.

MRS. DELMAR.

He awaits
Thy last resolve.

WALTER.

Not now ; 'twere ill to stake
On one rash cast thy peace. What issue time
Shall prove thy weal—I will adopt my own.

FLORENCE (*taking his hand.*)

My dear—best—brother !

WALTER.

Contrast of life ! Florence an outcast—Laura with
opinion for her slave. The oracle of the hour, the
dispenser of reputations—absolving or condemning by
a breath. How great her power ! What wounds
might it heal. What wrongs redress. Why not
those of Florence, her childhood's friend ? By Laura's
sanction innocence were cleared—malice confounded.
I will have audience of her. She may be moved to
see him who stood erect before her scorn—a suppliant
for another. (*Aside.*) Hope, dear Florence—hope !

[*He goes out.*

Enter ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT.

A messenger, Madam, from Miss Hallerton; she would know if your health and leisure permit you to receive her. (*To FLORENCE.*)

FLORENCE.

This is strange. (*Aside.*) Request the messenger to wait. I will speak with her. (*Attendant goes out.*)

MRS. DELMAR.

Insolent woman! Would she mock the victim of her heartlessness? But you will not see her!

FLORENCE.

I will, dear Mother. Come—I'll show you reason for it. [*They go out.*

SCENE III.—SIR GEORGE HALLERTON'S HOUSE
IN LONDON.

Sir GEORGE HALLERTON, TEMPLE, OSBORNE and THORNTON (*at wine*).

TEMPLE.

Thanks! Comrades! Thanks!

OSBORNE.

One brave libation's poured
In honour of his matchless lady—Laura!
Fill one to Temple! Come! Of Bacchus' car
The wheels should roll more glibly. Wine, George!

SIR GEORGE.

Nay;
In my dear sister's weal we pledge his own.

TEMPLE.

Out sorry host! Defraud'st me thus?

SIR GEORGE (*aside*).

I fear
Some evil issue to this mirth.

THORNTON.

I swear

Thou 'st barter'd souls with Temple.

OSBORNE.

No; he feels

A brother's interest for our Vivian—mourns
That fickle Fortune frowned on him last night.
Take heart!

TEMPLE.

To-night I challenge her again.
How say you? A brave venture!

OSBORNE.

As you will.

TEMPLE.

Nay, I would stake against ye—star by star,
And beggar Heaven of all its shining wealth,
So ye dare match me!

SIR GEORGE.

Patience, Sir, be ruled.
How sits this humour with those graver ends
You late aspired to? You would serve, methought,
Your country's cause.

TEMPLE.

Pah! All men serve themselves.
King, country, friendship—coins of hypocrites!
We're selfish all.

SIR GEORGE.

Yet there's a selfish prudence
Which who neglects, forgets his very self.

TEMPLE.

A paradox! He who forgets his woe
Profits himself; and if himself be woe,
By self forgetting, doth advantage self!
Then hail oblivious wisdom! let me drain thee.
(He drinks.)

THORNTON.

A very sage!

OSBORNE (*to SIR GEORGE*).
What canst thou answer, cynic?

Who 's jilted thee? Why, say her heart 's a maze.
Thornton shall teach thee how to thread it.

THORNTON.

Hold ;
You bear too hardly on me.

OSBORNE.

Come ! A toast.
Fair Florence Delmar! (To THORNTON.) Thou shalt
speak her thanks
Whose lavish favours make thee deputy.

THORNTON (*smiling*).

Oh base insinuator !

OSBORNE.

Nay, he knows
She did capitulate—yea, struck her flag,
Ere well he had laid siege.

SIR GEORGE.

Peace, Sir !

OSBORNE.

Tis true,
If vouchers given 'neath her own hand can prove it.

THORNTON (*affectedly*).
They went not to that length.

TEMPLE.

What, Florence Delmar!
Go on—well ?

SIR GEORGE.

Madman ! Peace !

TEMPLE.

Go on ! You say
That Florence Delmar—Oh, I choke! (*aside*) You say—

THORNTON (*pointing to OSBORNE*).
He says it, Sir !

TEMPLE.

Say it thyself.

THORNTON.

Not I.

TEMPLE (*starting up, and with sudden vehemence*).
 Unsay it, then ! Or by the all-piercing ken
 That sees the shudder of thy slanderous heart,
 I'll strike thee, liar !

OSBORNE.

Friend, methinks your jest
 Is hotly season'd !

TEMPLE.

Jest !—Take heed ! I bid thee
 Now—without pause, or moment's subterfuge,
 Give thy black lie—the lie ; that ere it breathe
 To taint the air, it perish. Do it, lest
 Confession lose its grace—compell'd, not given ! (*To*
THORNTON).

THORNTON.

Rude man ? I breathed no slander. How recal
 The words I did not speak ?

TEMPLE.

You did not speak !
 Most true. Your mischief masks and walks o' nights !
 Thou crawling slave ! that spread'st for Virtue's feet
 The net, but shunn'st her eye.

SIR GEORGE (*aside*).

I dreaded this.

(*A loud.*) These are discourteous words.

TEMPLE.

They're honest words.
 Dost thou rebuke them—thou, a brother ; *thou*
 Arrest the arm should shield thy Sister ? Shame !

SIR GEORGE.

She needs no shield—He dares not—

TEMPLE.

Right ! He dares not.
 His shaft is aimed where fortune's flew before,
 At one who hath no father, brother, friend !
 Wrong'd, lonely, desolate ! Ay, cringe !

OSBORNE (*to THORNTON*).

Thy blood
Is cool to brook this !

THORNTON.

Cringe to thee !

TEMPLE.

No, Sir !

To the pure excellence thy lips blaspheme—
The virgin loveliness that Providence—
Because it knew it holy—left defenceless,
But its white robes for armour ! Gaze on *that*,
And, dazzled by its radiance, to the sense
Of thine own darkness, cringe, though not to me !

OSBORNE.

Hold, Sir ! I make my own the indignity
You do my friend.

TEMPLE.

I do it not. I name it.

It is his own. The shame—the only shame—
We bear, is that we make. Hence, from my sight !
I do not lay thee prostrate, lest my hand
Should take contagion from an infamy
It cannot add to ! (*To THORNTON.*)

THORNTON.

You shall answer this.

OSBORNE.

No words, good Thornton, now ! Your injury asks
A weightier chastisement. Your servant ! Yet,
Reflect ere next you champion lady's fame,
You give not scandal pretext by desertion !

THORNTON.

A reckoning waits.

[*Go out THORNTON and OSBORNE.*

SIR GEORGE.

I'll follow and appease them ! (*He follows them out.*)

TEMPLE.

Truth ! Truth ! where was my title to redress
The virtue that I pierced ? How dared I rage,
And ape the knightly frown ?—I, from whose heel
Honour hath struck her spur !—Forsworn at heart !
Florence, thou art avenged ! Her bonds are iron—
Iron that cankers—for whose sake I burst
Thy floral links of love. The fatal charm
Dissolves too late. The beauty which from far
Shone like a diamond crown—its summit won—
Proves but an ice-peak glittering in the sun !

[He goes out.

SCENE IV.—MRS. DELMAR'S APARTMENT, AS BEFORE.

(LAURA and FLORENCE.)

LAURA.

She mentions not this slander. If unknown,
Oh, may she never know it; but defeat
Malice with ignorance. Now to test her love !
(Aside.) Leave England, and no farewell words for
friends !

FLORENCE.

Our journey's plan was sudden.

LAURA.

To forget
Thy friend at such a time too ! No concern
Felt in her coming nuptials—question none
Whether her will goes with them !

FLORENCE.

Doubt of that
I trust were wrong to you.—She can't design
To mock me with her triumph. (Aside.) And the
happy
Need not be told their bliss.

LAURA.

Thou'rt sure I'm happy ?

FLORENCE.

I'd think so.

LAURA.

Very happy!—On my brow
Shall the mine's planets cluster! Affluence
Shall make my whims despotic—luxury
Shall first exhaust my wants; then new create
To satisfy again. My rival's eyes
Shall be my splendour's mirrors. Who would pine
For husband's *love* whose liberal *hand* gives this.

FLORENCE.

For husband's love?

LAURA.

Or even waste a thought
On this unseemly change?

FLORENCE.

Change!

LAURA.

Ay; beyond
All precedent of metamorphosis.
A reveller who greets the amber dawn
With cheeks the midnight riot hath inflamed—

FLORENCE.

Why do you tell me this—why?

LAURA.

Nay, a gamester
Who squanders nightly at the feverish board
The wealth had smooth'd Care's rugged couch for years.

FLORENCE.

And you can speak it calmly?

LAURA.

I might grieve,
Could sorrow ought avail—ay, weep that lips
I once deemed tuned to virtue now should chime
In the dull scoffer's chorus.

FLORENCE.

Yet you wed?

LAURA.

The picture has its bright side—fortune, power.

FLORENCE.

Disgrace and guilt ! I cannot fix the thought. (*Aside*).

LAURA.

Methinks you stint a bride-expectant's dues ;
Congratulations, hopes !

(She rises and takes FLORENCE by the hand.)

FLORENCE.

Farewell !

LAURA.

Farewell—

Thou wayward child ! What would'st thou ?

FLORENCE.

Madam, nothing.

LAURA.

Hast nought to ask—to utter—ere I go
Is there no boon ? Well !

FLORENCE.

None. Yes, one thing—save him !

Oh, save him—save him !

(With sudden emotion as LAURA is going.)

LAURA.

He's in peril then ?

FLORENCE.

His heart—his peace are perilled !

LAURA (*tenderly*).

If they be—

Such evils lie not in my scope of cure,
What can I do ?

FLORENCE.

What do ! What could'st thou not—

His honour for thine impulse—drain the wealth

Of all thy soul in gracious deeds to buy

His spirit's ransom ? In thy nature shrine

So much of good that when he loves thee most

He needs must most love goodness for thy sake.

Desist not ; faint not ; for thy mighty prize

Count patience dross ! Should he upbraid thee, hope !

Repel thee—hope ! neglect thee—hope, still hope,

And with the tireless constancy of love
 Knock at the sleeping virtue in his heart,
 Till it awake and hail thee ! Oh, be sure
 Beauty less triumphs in a world of slaves
 Than in one heart she raises and reclaims !

LAURA.

Yes, this is love ! (*Aside.*)

FLORENCE.

Oh, did'st thou know, like me,
 What lofty tones sleep in those chords which now
 Harsh folly jars ! If o'er his head had met
 In one fell constellation all ill stars,
 And poured at once their pitiless vials down—
 Scorn, sickness, poverty—I could have borne it ;
 But thus in self degraded ! Oh, what shame
 Like that which cankers self respect ! What death
 Like that which sears the heart and makes the frame
 An animated tomb !

LAURA.

Florence, I'll save him,
 If there be power in effort !

FLORENCE.

Bless thee—bless thee !

(As FLORENCE is about to kneel, LAURA raises her
 to her bosom.)

LAURA.

'Tis I should kneel to thee, my friend—my sister !
 Be withered hand ere falsely joined to his
 Was pledged to hers. And yet a brother's ruin !
 No other hope ! (*Aside.*) Sweet, we must meet again.
 Thou 'lt promise this ?

FLORENCE.

I do.

LAURA.

Farewell !

FLORENCE.

Remember !

(LAURA goes out. FLORENCE sits as in abstraction.)

END OF FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—A ROOM IN SIR GEORGE HALLERTON'S
TOWN HOUSE.

Sir GEORGE HALLERTON and LAURA.

SIR GEORGE (*who embraces LAURA as she kneels by his chair*).

My more than sister ! How shall I requite thee—
Snatched by thy rare devotion from disgrace ?
My life—not words—must thank thee !

LAURA.

I have found
Again the generous strength whose visage care
Awhile obscured, the brother of my youth !

SIR GEORGE.

Thy rescued brother.

LAURA.

To the noble heart,
Which at my suit enlarged thee—not to me
Thy tribute pay. I could but tell thy strait,
Implore his aid, and frankly cry—*thus do,*
To save the brother of a maid who much
Hath trifled with thy peace, in wantonness
Feigning an unfelt love ! Whereat at once,
His nature melted in a sudden gush,
He bathed my hands with his consenting tears
As if in asking, I had given a boon ;
Nor knew I that this gracious succour came
From means so narrowed by that past excess
To which his misery drove him. (*Enter TEMPLE*
plainly attired.) He is here.
So early !

SIR GEORGE.

Friend, preserver ! Oh, how well
 Thou wear'st this princely sadness. Righteous Heaven,
 Prosper the just man's cause !

TEMPLE.

Amen. Rest with you
 The morning's freshness, madam !

SIR GEORGE.

Ere 'tis spent,
 We must from hence. I'll bid prepare. [*He goes out.*]

LAURA.

Is't far
 You ride to-day ?

TEMPLE.

The journey's brief; but urgent.

LAURA.

Heaven have you in its keeping ! In these tears
 Read blessings for the brother you have saved.
 Care and privation for his sake you bear—

TEMPLE.

Hush ! To cause happiness—is happiness.
 I'm thanked. And now? Speak—you divine my thought.

LAURA.

To-day she bids me farewell; nay, here's one
 Precedes her with report.

(Enter WALTER.)

What tidings, Walter?
 How bears she up ?

WALTER.

Too well. Though Folly jests, and envy smiles,
 And Friendship leaned on—fails her, yet her heart,
 This cruel siege is laid to—sounds without
 No note of suffering.

LAURA.

Fain, would I hope
 From her pure conscience she draws peace ?

WALTER.

Alas !
 Our peace takes rise in conscience, but round love

And reverence of our kind twines tendril-wise ;
These rudely wrenched away, its branch forlorn
Trails earth though never taint hath touched its root !

LAURA.

Too true. I cannot speak of this and keep
The strength I need. Haste, gentle friend ! Conduct
This injured patience hither. Bring her straight.—
Your glance surprised would question of my guest.
Let that name sleep till your return, beseech you !

(In a lower voice apart to WALTER. He goes out.)
Devoted heart ! That Florence should reject
The solace of such love !

TEMPLE.

His love !—Repulsed ?

LAURA.

She'd have the cloud of her imputed guilt
Rest on herself alone, and fears to taint
A pure repute by linking it with hers.

TEMPLE.

Peace, stifling heart ; rejoice—thou may'st aspire !

(Aside.)

And the sole bar is this ?

LAURA.

Her name redeemed,
She 's free to yield her heart.

TEMPLE.

She shall be free,
Or I not live.

LAURA.

Then must thou evidence
To all, her-innocence—" unwind the web
" Of meaning looks construed by rancorous hearts,
" Of harmless looks rehearsed in guilty tones,
" Of accidents that when converged around
" A central malice seem intents, of hints
" All substance when they strike, alas, all shade
" When we 'd repel !" From that safe boaster,
Thornton—
How win or force confession ?

TEMPLE.

Will and faith
Do much in any war. Till next we meet
Trust in them. 'Tis thy brother's step; he seeks me.

LAURA.

You cause the trust you counsel. [She goes out.]

TEMPLE.

He shall wed her.
Oh, sacrifice, how thou dost strengthen souls!

(Enter Sir GEORGE.)

How! overcast?

SIR GEORGE.

Is not my friend in peril?
My true, proved friend?

TEMPLE.

Discern'st thou in my look
Aught that's akin to peril?

SIR GEORGE.

There I read
Alone thy quarrel's justice—

TEMPLE.

And event.

[They go out.]

SCENE II.—A GARDEN WALK FRONTING THORNTON'S
HOUSE. THE WALK LAID OUT IN THE FRENCH
MANNER.

Enter OSBORNE and THORNTON.

OSBORNE.

I tell you freely, in a man less known
By daring and adventure, this forbearance
Had been translated—*fear*.

THORNTON.

Old fellowship
May tolerate a moment's choleric heat.

OSBORNE.

Your courage hath been proved, Sir, yet such weight
In pity's balance cast—makes honour's tremble ;
Words fraught with such indignity—

THORNTON.

A wrong

That's dead—why bury it ! (*Impatiently.*) Those burn-
ing words
Have passed into my blood, and at its core
Cankered my manhood ! (*Aside.*)

OSBORNE.

Nay ; perhaps you're right :
The lady's beauty scarcely merited,
The blazonry of argent steel and hue
Of life-blood for a field in gules. A month
Hath withered all her freshness, from her limbs
Stolen the free roundness, from her cheek the bloom.

THORNTON.

Cease ! Cease, I'm weary. All this wreck is mine.
What devil haunts me, whispering—*Perjurer,*
Thy victim perishes. I meant not that.
Hers was the only voice that made me feel
As once I felt in childhood. (*Aside.*)

OSBORNE.

Come ! I'll wager—
Now listen, man !

THORNTON.

Provoke me not ! Beware.

OSBORNE.

For my own sake I shall, for truly
I doubt the wisdom leaves a man at large
Prone to these strange distempers.

THORNTON.

I'll from town--
Its stifling streets, and dusty Mall at once—
This very day !

OSBORNE.

That's madder still. Leave town
When Fashion's at her solstice and when Cynthia—

THORNTON.

Pah!

Enter TEMPLE and Sir GEORGE.
Who intrudes? This honour's unexpected.

TEMPLER.

Perhaps unwelcome.

THORNTON.

Plainly, Sir, you find me
Upon the eve of travel, and encumber'd
With all a journey's cares.

TEMPLER.

There's one incumbrance
From which I'd free you ere you start—a weight
Change throws not off nor time accommodates.

THORNTON.

Having small leisure, may I ask its name?

TEMPLER.

The weight of a bad conscience.

THORNTON.

You'd spared pains
Had you made sure, before you proffered help,
That I required it. Sirs, your servant! (*Going.*)

TEMPLER.

Stay!
Our cause needs help though yours disdains it. Sir,
A pure and lovely maid hath been traduced—
Less by the tongue than specious smiles, asides,
And telegraphic glances, add to which
False letters counterfeiting her fair hand,
Or falsely gained if real. We'd help this maiden.

THORNTON.

Dare you suspect me—

SIR GEORGE.

On strong grounds.

THORNTON.

Proof! proof!

TEMPLER.

Take this. You're what is called a gallant man,

One who permits no wrong, foregoes no right.
Some days since, I assailed you with a scorn
Brave men as little brook as blows. How comes it
That I am unchastised ? It was no awe
Of me unnerved your arm ; 'twas awe of truth !

OSBORNE.

Your lenity's reward ! (To THORNTON.)

THORNTON.

The tenderness
Men owe to ladies' fame may sometimes pinion
The arm that else would punish.

TEMPLE.

I am sorry
To find you still a braggart.

OSBORNE.

Soon thy sword
Will leap out of itself. (To THORNTON.)

THORNTON.

Who heard me boast
This lady's favour? Or if 'twere assumed,
Proves that her kindness gave not—(hesitates.)

TEMPLE.

License? No !
Thou didst not say it. Look in my face and say it,
And I'll believe thee. I am glad you're dumb.
Your lip, though used to defamation, gasps
At this last master-lie. Come ! your confession.

THORNTON.

You know, Sir, what restrains me. (Turns to go.)

TEMPLE.

Penitent,
I would have called thee ; but must call thee—coward !

OSBORNE.

Out with thy weapon, if thou would'st not have
Me turn and echo—Coward !

THORNTON (*drawing*).

Take your ground.

(They fight; THORNTON, with desperation. After
a few passes he is disarmed.)

TEMPLE.

Recal thy sword.
 I would not hurry thee across the verge
 That makes remorse too late. Take back thy sword,
 Grasp it like rescued honour, save even now,
 Compunction move thee to avow thy guilt,
 And lay thy slander bare. I pause a moment.

THORNTON.

Confess, and brand my name with infamy. (*Aside.*)
 (*He raises his arm as if to re-engage; then drops it irresolutely, and turns to OSBORNE.*)
 A mist's before mine eyes; let me lean on thee.
 (*OSBORNE regards him with disdain.*)

TEMPLE.

A recreant's arm mates with a slanderer's tongue.
 (*To Sir GEORGE.*)

SIR GEORGE.

True; vice indeed looks abject, but yet spare him.
 (*Arresting TEMPLE's arm.*)

TEMPLE.

Confess!—Mark that averted head.

SIR GEORGE.

Yet, spare him.

TEMPEL (struggling with Sir GEORGE).

Spare—to thy guard!—spare—on what plea? The wretch
 Who spoils thy substance, or lets out thy life,
 Dwells mountains nearer heaven than he who creeps
 Through open doors of trust to virtue's side,
 And stabs her in the darkness with a lie
 That hath all poison's pangs but not its mercy—
 It racks, corrodes, and blasts, but does not kill.
 Free me—thou block'st the lightning's passage. Way!

(Bursting from Sir GEORGE.)

Up to thy guard!

(After a pause, casting away his sword, as by a sudden impulse.)

No need, I bid thee live;
 There lies my sword. (Grasping THORNTON's arm.)

THORNTON.

I confess—by chance obtained,
Then used to serve a guilty boast.

TEMPLE.

Proceed.

THORNTON.

Within,
The whole will I set down and testify.
Oh, hide me earth ! My cup of shame is full !

OSBORNE.

Farewell, Sir ! after this we meet no more.

TEMPLE.

How, Osborne ! Mate thee with the criminal,
And shun the penitent ? Oft the world's way—
Be it not thine. My hand, Sir. Osborne, yours !

(OSBORNE gives his hand to THORNTON.)

Florence, I fly to bind thy breaking heart,
And though its pulses throb for me no more,
'Tis fortune past desert to make thee happy. (*Aside*)
(To THORNTON.) Come, on thee smiles the sun ap-
provingly;

A day draws near thou shalt return his glance,
 And feel thou hast the right. Come, Thornton, come!
 [They go out.

SCENE III.—SIR GEORGE HALLERTON'S TOWN
 HOUSE.

FLORENCE (*seated*), LAURA and WALTER.

LAURA.

Dost thou not speak to friends?

WALTER.

You clasp our hands
 In token of assent, and yet refuse
 The rights of friendship—trust and sympathy.

FLORENCE.

Sympathy soothes complaint, and I complain not.

WALTER.

Thou dost; such silence more than words complains.

FLORENCE.

The grief that words can ease no solace needs,
 The grief they cannot—finds none.

WALTER.

Yes, they vent
 The tide that else might burst its flood-gates.

FLORENCE.

Ay;
 They burst at last!

LAURA.

Oh, give thy sorrow way,
 If not for thy relief, to vindicate
 Thine innocence by protest. This harsh world
 Mistakes the patience at its bar for guilt,
 And oft confirms the wrong that silence suffers.

FLORENCE.

I disavow the court; it first creates
 The lie on which it next assumes to judge.

I know its penalties ;—the lip of scorn
Poisoning the silence it despairs to break,
The glance that stabs in pity, and the forms
That swerve aside to let contagion pass !

LAURA.

Thou shalt have justice.

FLORENCE.

All *shall*. But, thou—Heaven,—
Whence souls inherit virtue, lift up mine
To confront wrong with dumbness till the hour
When man's impeachments stand themselves im-
peached
At thy great audit ! (*Rising.*)

WALTER.

Laura, I could think,
Thus gazing in thine orbs, which tenderness
Softens, not dims—the perfect dream restored
Of my past worship. (*Apart to her.*)

LAURA.

Were it happiness
For you to deem so ?

WALTER.

Life could ask no more
So she might share it.

LAURA.

Leave us now. Yet stay ! (*In a louder voice.*)
A welcome errand waits you. Bear this letter
To Vivian Temple's lodgings. 'Tis from one
He hath redeemed from shame, from worse—the guilt
That is shame's source.

WALTER.

This Temple's deed !

LAURA.

A marvel,
Yet give it welcome. You shall after learn
How he whose lapse we mourned hath so retrieved it,
That all his clouding errors are but foils
To brighten his repentance.

WALTER.

Can it be?

LAURA.

Accept the wonder for the joy comes with it.—
Now leave us, do not speak, you see she's moved.

(*Apart to him. WALTER goes out.*)

FLORENCE (*who, after regarding LAURA intently for some moments, rises and approaches her.*)

Now Laura! Is this true?

LAURA.

You speak of Temple.
Whate'er he was, he is what women deem
The men they love should be. 'Tis just to say so,
Though I, perverse, discard him.

FLORENCE.

Do not mock me.
You could not look upon me thus and mock me!
Now, answer.

LAURA.

As I live my words are true.

FLORENCE.

Thanks! How I love thee, Laura. Thanks!

LAURA.

For what?

FLORENCE.

For bliss I had paid life for with a smile,
My gain so vast! He is restored to honour,
Virtue, and good men's blessings.

LAURA.

I rejoice
To see this ardour and yet tremble too,
'Tis born so suddenly.

FLORENCE.

Thy news was sudden—
A sun without a dawn, that lit at once
My midnight world with glory. Ah, no breath
Of slander pitiless can freeze that joy,
No failing strength impair it!

LAURA.

By this rapture,

Thou surely lov'st him ; were he at thy knee,
Would'st bid him rise, thy chosen !

FLORENCE.

Never, Laura ;
Never, my friend.

LAURA.

Then why this transport ?

FLORENCE.

Why !
Does love whose life is in its current, pause
For flowery banks to flow in ? Count me not
So poor I cannot in the good rejoice
I do not share. No ; when, as it shall do,
The world grows proud of him, and in Time's march
He moves triumphant, followed by acclaim—
I may not bind the garland on his brow,
Nor travel at his side ; but *I* may catch—
Far off in my lone life's sequestered haunt—
A note from the full anthem of his praise,
And bless the heavens for him !

LAURA.

Oh, could he hear thee !

FLORENCE.

Ere he should know the love this heart conceals,
This heart should break. His own was never mine,
Save in a dream of impulse.

LAURA.

Thine it was ;
It is thine only. Nay, I'll prove —(*Enter an Attendant*)
Your news ? (*She speaks to him apart, dismisses him,*
and returns to FLORENCE.)
We're interrupted. Sweet, awhile retire
Till I dismiss these comers, for I know
It is grief's instinct to shun scrutiny.
The library ! Await my coming there.

(FLORENCE goes out. As LAURA, who conducts her to
the door, again comes forward, enter hastily, TEM-
PLE, Sir GEORGE, and WALTER.)

TEMPLE.

I bade thee trust in will and faith !

LAURA.

They conquer ?

TEMPLE.

The record. Does it dazzle thee with joy ? (*Presenting papers.*)

SIR GEORGE.

Thank Temple solely for this happiness.

LAURA.

Quick with these tidings to the library !

You'll find her there whom chiefly they concern.

(*Apart to WALTER, who goes out, followed by Sir George.*)

The charter of new life ! Her name redeemed—

And by your act ?

TEMPLE.

The stainless innocence

Which ne'er did voucher need to those who knew her

Shines manifest to all. You hold the proofs

Subscribed by him who wronged her—now repentant.

LAURA.

I thank you for her ; but so deep a debt

Should her own lips acknowledge.

TEMPLE.

Spare me, Madam.

A debt to me ! Oh, my unworthiness

Had gained too dear a boon if by my life

One gleam of joy the more might brighten hers.

(*The library door opens, and discovers Sir George, WALTER, and FLORENCE, who holds the papers in her hand.*)

FLORENCE.

Credentials of my honour—borne by him !

Nay—let me pass. (*Advancing.*)

WALTER (*restraining her.*)

Nay ; they're in earnest converse.

LAURA.

You love her, yet ?

TEMPLE.

As deeply as I pray
A purer love may bless her. Florence, Heaven
Sow all thy path with joys as dear as thou
To eyes that fear to lose thee ; be thy tears
But dews to nurture peace, and from its depths,
Life's roughest sea sweep jewels to thy feet !

FLORENCE,
Of me he speaks—of *me* ! (*Again advancing.*)

WALTER.

Be patient still.

LAURA.

You'll see her then—at least to say farewell ?

TEMPLE.

See her ! ay, while the heart hath sight, or memory
The power to bless that sight with what it loves ;
But no more face to face. I've too much wronged her
To bear—or hope it. You, my friend, will speak
For me these parting words. Say that I sought
Her pardon and her blessing—that I bear
Her memory for my banner. It shall never—
No never, stoop to shame !—You'll tell her this—
And—

LAURA.

Do you weep ?

TEMPLE.

Ah, now I feel 'twere bliss
Could I but hear her say—*thou art forgiven !*
She would not scorn my penitence.

FLORENCE.

Oh, free me ! (*Bursting from WALTER.*)
No ! no—
She would not, could not, does not, Vivian—No !
She honours—thanks thee.

TEMPLE.

Florence ! (*He kneels.*)

FLORENCE.

Still he loves me. (*Apart.*)

TEMPLE.

There's not an accent but my heart shall hoard,
And live upon its echoes when we part! (Rising.)

LAURA.

Part! What a word for lovers.

FLORENCE.

Vivian,
Is it your will we part?

TEMPLE.

My will!

LAURA.

His will!

FLORENCE.

A word, a sign,—thou lovest me?

TEMPLE.

Do I dream!

Give not my hopes a taste of bliss which lost,
Scorning all meaner nourishment, they starve.
Fate's in your breath; pause ere you speak—I love thee!

FLORENCE.

Then what shall part us? When I wept thy fall,
I clung to what thou *wert*—the very tomb
Of thy dead faith more precious than the life
Of any meaner joy! and now my soul
Hails her reviving trust as from the grave,
What, *what* shall part us?

TEMPLE.

To my breast! (They embrace.) Cling—cling!
And art thou in his arms whose lips should kiss
The dust thy steps make holy? Yet I deemed
This hand was pledged unto a worthier mate.

LAURA.

A pet device I plotted to disclose
The depths of love which—hoping no reward,
Wrought for thee as if worlds repaid success.

(To FLORENCE.)

See, Sir! The hand you thought was knit to hers
Claims only mine and takes from lowness
The faith which splendour dizzied.

(Gives her hand to WALTER.)

WALTER.

"Twas a fall
Whose end was dignity.

SIR GEORGE.

Repented error
Is virtue fortified.

LAURA.

Why here's a tale
Strange as thou e'er didst set to idle song.

FLORENCE.

Call it not idle. There's no faith expressed
By bard, but seeks for home the human breast.
Tis in the heart the loveliest shapes Ideal
Demand their shrine. The good man makes them
Real—
Does deeds with Poetry's bright impulse rife,
And makes the Dreams of Fancy—Truths of Life !

CURTAIN FALLS.





